VOL. LXXVII
AUGUST 1972

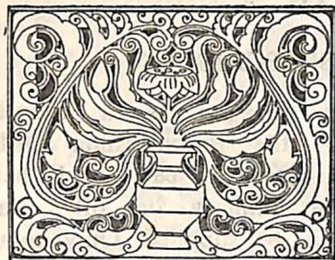
Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA



ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI
HIMALAYAS



Editorial Office

P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.

Publication Office

5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta-14
Phone: 44-2898



Annual Subscription

India, Nepal, Bangladesh, & Ceylon Rs. 8
U.S.A. $ 4.00
Other Countries £ 1.00

Life Subscription

Rs. 150 $ 100 £ 20

Single Copy

75 P. 35 cents. 10 P.

Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE
RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

AUGUST 1972

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Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXVII AUGUST 1972 No. 8

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (posed by himself): 'How can one expect to attain God without renunciation ?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Suppose one thing is placed upon another; how can you get the second without removing the first ?

'One must pray to God without any selfish desire. But selfish worship, if practised with perseverance, is gradually turned into selfless worship. Dhruva practised tapasya to obtain his kingdom, but at last he realized God. He said, "Why should a man give up gold if he gets it while searching for glass beads ?"

'God can be realized when a man acquires sattva. Householders engage in philanthropic work, such as charity, mostly with a motive. That is not good. But actions without motives are good. Yet it is very difficult to leave motives out of one's actions.

'When you realize God, will you pray to Him, "O God, please grant that I may dig reservoirs, build roads, and found hospitals and dispensaries" ? After the realization of God all such desires are left behind.

'Then mustn't one perform acts of compassion, such as charity to the poor ? I do not forbid it. If a man has money, he should give it to remove the sorrows and sufferings that come to his notice. In such an event the wise man says, "Give the poor something." But inwardly he feels: "What can I do ? God alone is the Doer. I am nothing."

'The great souls, deeply affected by the sufferings of men, show them the way to God. Sankaracharya kept the "ego of Knowledge" in order to teach mankind. The gift of knowledge and devotion is far superior to the gift of food. Therefore Chaitanyadeva distributed bhakti to all, including the outcaste. Happiness and suffering are the inevitable characteristics of the body. You have come to eat mangoes. Fulfil that desire. The one thing needful is jnana and bhakti. God alone is Substance; all else is illusory.

'It is God alone who does everything. You may say that in that case man may commit sin. But that is not true. If a man is firmly convinced that God

alone is the Doer and that he himself is nothing, then he will never make a false step.

'It is God alone who has planted in man's mind what the "Englishman"[1] calls free will. People who have not realized God would become engaged in more and more sinful actions if God had not planted in them the notion of free will. Sin would have increased if God had not made the sinner feel that he alone was responsible for his sin.

'Those who have realized God are aware that free will is a mere appearance. In reality man is the machine and God its Operator, man is the carriage and God its Driver.'

Question (asked by a devotee): 'Then what is the way for those who have not seen God? Must they give up all the duties of the world?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'The best path for this age is bhaktiyoga, the path of bhakti prescribed by Narada: to sing the name and glories of God and pray to Him with a longing heart, "O God, give me knowledge, give me devotion, and reveal Thyself to me!" The path of karma is extremely difficult. Therefore one should pray: "O God, make my duties fewer and fewer; and may I, through Thy grace, do the few duties that Thou givest me without any attachment to their results! May I have no desire to be involved in many activities!"

'It is not possible to give up work altogether. Even to think or to meditate is a kind of work. As you develop love for God, your worldly activities become fewer and fewer of themselves. And you lose all interest in them. Can one who has tasted a drink made of sugar candy enjoy a drink made of ordinary molasses?'

Question: 'The English people always exhort us to be active. Isn't action the aim of life then?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'The aim of life is the attainment of God. Work is only a preliminary step; it can never be the end. Even unselfish work is only a means; it is not the end.

'Sambhu Mallick once said to me, "Please bless me, sir, that I may spend all my money for good purposes, such as building hospitals and dispensaries, making roads, and digging wells." I said to him: "It will be good if you can do these things in a spirit of detachment. But that is very difficult. Whatever you may do, you must always remember that the aim of this life of yours is the attainment of God and not the building of hospitals and dispensaries. Suppose God appeared before you and said to you, 'Accept a boon from Me.' Would you then ask Him, 'O God, build me some hospitals and dispensaries'? Or would you not rather pray to Him: 'O God, may I have pure love at Your Lotus Feet! May I have Your uninterrupted vision!'? Hospitals, dispensaries, and all such things are unreal. God alone is real and all else unreal. Furthermore, after realizing God one feels that He alone is the Doer and we are but His instruments. Then why should we forget Him and destroy ourselves by being involved in too many activities? After realizing Him, one may, through His grace, become His instrument in building many hospitals and dispensaries."'

---

[1] Sri Ramakrishna used this word to denote Europeans in general, and also those whose ways and thoughts were largely influenced by western ideas.

ONWARD FOR EVER !

Unfortunately in this life, the vast majority of persons are groping through this dark life without any ideal at all. If a man with an ideal makes a thousand mistakes, I am sure that the man without an ideal makes fifty thousand. Therefore, it is better to have an ideal. And this ideal we must hear about as much as we can, till it enters into our hearts, into our brains, into our very veins, until it tingles in every drop of our blood and permeates every pore in our body. We must meditate upon it. 'Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh,' and out of the fullness of the heart the hand works too.

It is thought which is the propelling force in us. Fill the mind with the highest thoughts, hear them day after day, think them month after month. Never mind failures; they are quite natural, they are the beauty of life, these failures. What would life be without them? It would not be worth having if it were not for struggles. Where would be the poetry of life? Never mind the struggles, the mistakes. I never heard a cow tell a lie, but it is only a cow—never a man. So never mind these failures, these little backslidings; hold the ideal a thousand times, and if you fail a thousand times, make the attempt once more. The ideal of man is to see God in everything. But if you cannot see Him in everything, see Him in one thing, in that thing which you like best, and then see Him in another.

Vivekananda

HOMAGE TO SRI AUROBINDO

EDITORIAL

I

'When the lotus opens,' said Sri Ramakrishna, 'the bees come of their own accord to seek the honey; so let the lotus of your character be full-blown, and the results will follow.' Sri Aurobindo, the Saint of Pondicherry, became such a full-blown lotus—*aravinda* in Sanskrit means 'lotus'—, brimming with the honey of holiness, wisdom, and bliss. Attracted by the spiritual aroma of this lotus, the aspirant-bees swarmed to it uninvited not only from India but from all over the world. Soon the *tapobhūmi*, the place of his penance and Yoga, became a busy spiritual laboratory where the sincere seekers worked methodically and diligently to realize the truths taught by their illuminated teacher. The fragrance of that beautiful lotus continues to spread even today attracting an ever larger number of seeker-bees.

Results, tangible and intangible, have surely followed. Many aspirants of the higher life have found inexhaustible inspiration and unfailing guidance in his teachings. His thoughts, charged with the beauty and power of yogic realization, have radiated far and wide. India's spiritual genius has spoken to humanity again through his voice. That the age of living a divine life is not merely not over but is just beginning and a time will come when a whole new race of supermen will rise and divinize this very earth is envisaged and taught by Sri Aurobindo. To state his ideal in his own sonorous style :

> 'Unity for the human race by an inner oneness and not only by an external association of interests ; the resurgence of man out of the merely animal and economic life or the merely intellectual and aesthetic into the glories of the spiritual existence ; the pouring of the power of the spirit into the physical mould and mental instrument, so that

man may develop his manhood into that true supermanhood which shall exceed our present state as much as this exceeds the animal state from which science tells us that we have issued. These three are one; for man's unity and man's self-transcendence can come only by living in the Spirit.'[1]

It is rather difficult to assess the work and achievement of even an ordinary thinker or leader. How much more difficult will it be when the leader is a great sage who is in touch with the cosmic verities! 'No one can write about my life,' Sri Aurobindo once warned a disciple, 'because it has not been on surface for man to see.' Some of the surface-seeing men had even criticized his complete retirement from the political arena then. As it is, undoubtedly there is plenty on the surface for man to see. For instance, his vast and profound writings and the great religious and philosophical movement set rolling with thousands of followers. But compared to his below-the-surface (or is it far above-the-surface?) work, the others are like the exposed part of a floating iceberg. Rightly has M. Romain Rolland observed in his *India on the March*:

'Here comes Aurobindo Ghose, the completest synthesis that has been realized to this day, of the genius of Asia and the genius of Europe. He believes that humanity is going to enlarge its domain by the acquisition of a new knowledge, new power, new capacities, which will lead to as great a revolution in human life as did the physical science in the 19th century.... If with Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Ghose, she [India] retires at times into the farthest retreats of her thought, it is only to make a spring and bound forward further to the front. And the last of the great Rishis holds in his hand, in firm unrelaxed grip, the bow of creative energy.'

The bow of creative energy and Sri Aurobindo's grip on it, his followers believe, are still unrelaxed.

II

Sri Aurobindo's long fourteen-year stay in England, during the most formative period of his life, did not blight his patriotic and religious susceptibilities. He was no doubt a brilliant intellectual, a master of English and Latin and a few European languages, and had passed the open competition for the Indian Civil Service. But he was not tempted by the prospects of a scramble to the top rungs of administrative service under the British masters. He deliberately disqualified himself for the I.C.S. In 1893, accepting an assignment in the Baroda State Service, he returned to India. The next thirteen years, till he plunged into the national liberation struggles in 1906, he devoted himself to absorbing the spirit of Indian culture and religion, and to literary activity. It was during these years that he learnt Sanskrit, Bengali, and some other Indian languages and prepared himself—being possibly translucently conscious of it—for his future mission. That he was a dynamic and dexterous leader of men is proved by the fact of his galvanizing the national freedom movement in and outside Bengal, and that in a very short time. His writings and speeches were fiery and penetrative and his capacity for work and organization was amazing. It was at this time that he came into contact with Sister Nivedita, the Irish disciple of Swami Vivekananda, who was counselling him on various occasions about the conduct of the revolutionary movement.

Readers of this Journal might be interested to know that Sri Aurobindo was irresistibly drawn to both Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and was profoundly influenced by their lives and thoughts. He wrote occasional magazine articles, both in English

[1] Quoted by Anilbaran Roy in *Sri Aurobindo and the New Age* (Pub. by John M. Watkins, London, 1940), pp. 9-10.

(*Karmayogin*) and Bengali (*Dharma*), urging people to follow their teachings. Even the very dust of Dakshineswar where the Great Master practised severe penance and realized God and taught disciples was considered holy by Sri Aurobindo. According to his own writing, he had actually collected some earth from Dakshineswar and preserved it in a carton in his room. The police officer who nabbed him in that room seized this carton suspecting it to be some explosive. Sri Aurobindo later quipped that, after all, 'from one point of view, the police officer's suspicion cannot be said to be baseless', thereby meaning that the dust of Dakshineswar had spiritually explosive possibilities. And it proved prophetic in his own life! Referring to Sri Ramakrishna, he once wrote in the *Karmayogin*: 'It was when the flower of the educated youth of Calcutta bowed down at the feet of an illiterate Hindu ascetic, a self-illuminated ecstatic and mystic without a single touch or trace of the alien thought or education upon him that the battle was won.'

Through all these years of his life abroad and in India, God, the Hound of Heaven, was closing in on him. Sri Aurobindo used to have uplifting spiritual experiences, with ethereal visions and voices. On his return to India, as he landed at Apollo Bunder in Bombay, he felt an infinite calm descending on him and suffusing his soul. He was not a believer in image worship. But once, when he had gone to a shrine of Kālī on the banks of river Narmadā, he felt the living presence of the Goddess in the image. In Kashmir, on the hill of Śaṅkarācārya, he had an experience of infinite void. In his famous 'Uttarapara Speech', he describes in ringing language the soul-elevating experience—while in Alipore jail—of seeing the whole universe as Vāsudeva or God. The iron bars of his prison cell, the branches and leaves of the tree in front, the rough bed, the thieves and murderers in captivity, the sentries and jailors, the pleaders, witnesses and the magistrate—all were none other than Nārāyaṇa, God. It was in this jail that he closely studied the *Gītā* and derived great inspiration from its verses. Again, while in this jail, he used to hear the voice and feel the presence of Swami Vivekananda instructing him on certain aspects of yoga. Finally in 1910, being borne by the providentially-guided stream of events, Sri Aurobindo retired to the sanctuary and seclusion of Pondicherry, then under French control. There he remained for the next forty years, practising, realizing, and propagating his Yoga and its doctrines till 5 December 1950 on which day he cast off his physical vestment.

III

Sri Aurobindo draws abundantly from the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the *Gītā,* and the Tantras to build his thought system. Though he employs Sanskrit terminology, in most cases the terminal connotations are amplified or altered. He accepts *in toto* the Vedāntic concept of Brahman, the Absolute Truth-Consciousness-Bliss. This Reality is the Self of all, one and eternal. Out of the rhythm of this Reality the world-system is evolved. The universe and the individuals in it then are not illusory but equally real. In this regard Sri Aurobindo is greatly influenced by the Tantras which posit *māyā* not as a mere illusion but as a creative force of Śiva which evolves world-systems without affecting His purity. Again the influence of the western scientific theory of evolution and the western positive attitude to the material world are noticeable in this view.

Sri Aurobindo asserts that this One Being and Consciousness is involved in Matter. Evolution is the method by which this Consciousness liberates itself through the several stages of life, mind, Overmind, Supermind, and Spirit. He points out that while Nature was inconscient in matter and subconscient in animals, she becomes cons-

cient in man. From this stage onwards Nature becomes able to evolve by a conscious will in the instrument. But the instrument has to be made strong and converted into the higher principle through the disciplines of Yoga. In the past it has been done by drawing oneself away from the world and rising to higher levels till one reached the Absolute Spirit. Sri Aurobindo teaches that a descent of the higher principle is possible which will not only release the spiritual Self *from* the world but release it *in* the world. In his own words:

> 'The passage from the lower to the higher nature is the aim of Yoga. And this passage may effect itself by the rejection of the lower and escape to the higher,—the ordinary view,—or by the transformation of the lower and its elevation to the higher nature. It is this rather that must be the aim of an integral Yoga.'[2]

In this transformation of the lower and its elevation to the higher nature, the Supramental power has an essential role to play. The first process of Yoga is therefore to open the ranges of the inner being and from there to live outward, by governing the outer with an inner light and *dynamis.* In doing so the aspirant discovers that he is the true soul, a spark from the Divine Fire. He has to learn to live in this spiritual Self and purify and orientate by its drive towards the Truth the rest of the nature. There can follow afterwards an opening upward and descent of a higher principle of the Being. The 'fixed and unfailing aspiration from below' is sure to be responded by 'a supreme grace from above'. And the transfiguring grace from above will descend to crown the human effort and 'rend the lid and the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Life Divine and immortal's Ananda'! In this two-way movement of the Spirit there is much to be gained by the disciplines of the traditional yogas of devotion, selfless work, self-control, discrimination, self-surrender, serenity, humility, and egolessness.

IV

Sri Aurobindo's teachings have both an intellectual appeal and a practical relevance. His letters specially written in reply to questions pertaining to *sādhanā* (spiritual practice) sent in by Yoga-aspirants are instinct with a rare spiritual insight. With the earnest hope that they will be of some help to our readers, we have culled here a sonnet which banters a sham Vedāntist, and a handful of teachings on the inner life:

*

Self

He said, 'I am egoless, spiritual, free,'
Then swore because his dinner was not ready.
I asked him why. He said, 'It is not me,
But the belly's hungry god who gets unsteady.'

I asked him why. He said, 'It is his play.
I am unmoved within, desireless, pure.
I care not what may happen day by day.'
I questioned him, 'Are you so very sure?'

He answered, 'I can understand your doubt.
But to be free is all. It does not matter
How you may kick and howl and rage and shout,
Making a row over your daily platter.

To be aware of self is liberty,
Self I have got and, having self, am free.'[3]

*

'.... If thoughts and activities come [to the calm mind], they do not rise at all out of the mind, but they come from outside and cross the mind as a flight of bird crosses the sky in a windless air. It passes, disturbs nothing, leaving no trace.

---

[2] *Arya,* 1914, p. 326.

[3] Sri Aurobindo: *Last Poems,* 1952.

Even if a thousand images or the most violent events pass across it, the calm stillness remains as if the very texture of the mind were a substance of eternal and indestructible peace. A mind that has achieved this calmness can begin to act, even intensely and powerfully, but it will keep its fundamental stillness—originating nothing from itself but receiving from Above and giving it a mental form without adding anything of its own, calmly, dispassionately, though with the joy of the Truth and the happy power and light of its passage.'[4]

*

'Not to impose one's mind and vital will on the Divine but to receive the Divine's will and follow it, is the true attitude of *sadhana*. Not to say, "This is my right, want, claim, need, requirement, why do I not get it?" but to give oneself, to surrender and to receive with joy whatever the Divine gives, not grieving or revolting, is the better way. Then what you receive will be the right thing for you.'[5]

*

'It does not matter what defects you may have in your nature. The one thing that matters is your keeping yourself open to the Force. Nobody can transform himself by his own unaided efforts; it is only the Divine Force that can transform him. If you keep yourself open, all the rest will be done for you.'[6]

*

'Eliminate egoism in all its forms; eliminate it from every movement of your consciousness.'[7]

*

'The world will trouble you so long as any part of you belongs to the world. It is only if you belong entirely to the Divine that you can become free.'[8]

*

'Purity is to accept no other influence but only the influence of the Divine.'[9]

*

'.... All work done in an egoistic spirit, however good for people in the world of the Ignorance, is of no avail to the seeker of the Yoga.'[10]

4 Sri Aurobindo: *Bases of Yoga* (Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1936), pp. 7-8.
5 ibid., pp. 54-5.
6 ibid., p. 58.
7 ibid., p. 84.
8 ibid., pp. 132-3.
9 Sri Aurobindo: *Lights on Yoga* (Sri Aurobindo Library, Howrah, 1935), p. 48.
10 ibid., p. 88.

There is no man who is not restless—and restless for what? Restless for his forgotten nature, his infinite nature. Blessed is he who is thus restless, and most miserable is he who is contented with his present lot. The contented man is no man; he is no more than a brute. You may keep an elephant tied up all its life, and it will not mind as long as you give it some food. Men who are thus contented are no better than animals.

—*Swami Ramakrishnananda*

TWO WRITINGS BY SRI AUROBINDO

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

The 'Utsav' of Ramakrishna Paramahansa is an event that annually stirs Calcutta to its depths. Year after year the number increases, of those who believe that the birth of the sage of Dakshineswar has been the critical event of the present age in India. Some believe this, for one reason; others for another. The devotee sees in him the last of the Avatars. The historian sees the keystone of the idea that constitutes Hinduism. The partisan feels that he satisfies all parties and conflicts with none. The philosopher finds in him the living embodiment of the highest Vedānta. And even amongst the workers there are some who derive from the spectacle of his birth the faith that inspires and sanctions all their struggles.

The world could not bear a second birth like that of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, in five hundred years. The mass of thought that he has left, has first to be transformed into experience; the spiritual energy given forth has to be converted into achievement. Until this is done, what right have we to ask for more? What could we do with more?

Religion always, in India, precedes national awakenings. Śaṅkarācārya was the beginning of a wave that swept round the whole country, culminating in Caitanya in Bengal, the Sikh Gurus in the Punjab, Śivāji in Maharashtra, and Rāmānuja and Madhvācārya in the South. Through each of these a people sprang into self-realization, into national energy and consciousness of their own unity. Sri Ramakrishna represents a synthesis in one person of all the leaders. It follows that the movements of his age will unify and organize the more provincial and fragmentary movements of the past. Ramakrishna Paramahansa is the epitome of the whole. His was the great superconscious life which alone can witness to the infinitude of the current that bears us all oceanwards. He is the proof of the Power behind us, and the future before us. So great a birth initiates great happenings. Many are to be tried as by fire, and not a few will be found to be pure gold; but whatever happens, whether victory or defeat, speedy fulfilment or prolonged struggle, the fact that he has been born and lived here in our midst, in the sight and memory of men now living is proof that

God hath sounded for the trumpet
That shall never call retreat!
He is sifting out the hearts of men
Before His judgment seat;
Oh, be swift my soul, to answer Him:
Be jubilant, my feet!
While God is marching on!

(From *Karmayogin,* 5th Caitra, 1316)

THE AWAKENING SOUL OF INDIA

The nineteenth century in India was imitative, self-forgetful and artificial. It aimed at a successful reproduction of Europe in India forgetting the deep saying of the Gītā: 'Better the law of one's own being though it be badly done than an alien Dharma well followed; death in one's own Dharma is better, it is a dangerous thing to follow the law of another's nature.' For death in one's own Dharma brings new birth, success in an alien path means successful suicide. If we had succeeded in Europeanising ourselves we would have lost for ever our spiritual capacity, our intellectual force, our national elasticity and power of self-renovation. That tragedy has been enacted more than once in history, only the worst and most mournful example of all

would have been added. Had the whole activity of the country been of the derivatives and alien kind that result would have supervened. But the life breath of the nation still moves in the religious movement of Bengal and the Punjab, in the political aspirations of Maharashtra and in the literary activities of Bengal. Even here it was an undercurrent, the peculiar temperament and vitality of India struggling for self-preservation under a load of foreign ideas and foreign forms and it was not till in the struggle between these two elements the balance turned in favour of the national Dharma that the salvation of India was assured. The resistance of the conservative element in Hinduism, *tāmasic,* inert, ignorant, uncreative though it was, saved the country by preventing an even more rapid and thorough disintegration actually taking place and by giving respite and time for the persistent national self to emerge and find itself. It was in religion first that the soul of India awoke and triumphed. There were always indications, always great forerunners but it was when the flower of the educated youth of Calcutta bowed down at the feet of an illiterate Hindu ascetic, a self-illuminated ecstatic and 'Mystic' without a single trace or touch of the alien thought or education upon him, that the battle was won. The going forth of Vivekananda, marked by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake not only to survive but to conquer (From *Karmayogin,* 12th Āṣārh, 1316)

RAMMOHAN RAY: A PEEP INTO HIS LIFE AND WORK

PROF. PRANAB RANJAN GHOSH

In honouring Rammohan Ray, India will honour herself this year. The history of modern India starts from him. And in him meet the ancient and medieval India with a new meaning and purpose. If assimilation of different cultures and religions is the genius of India, it again started functioning in the personality of Rammohan, born in the seventies of eighteenth-century Bengal. As all renaissances in the history of the world start from the intellectual sphere, so it was in the case of the Indian renaissance. Starting from the intellectual plane it went deeper and found its social and spiritual fulfilment first in the Brāhma movement, and then the fulfilment, if we may say so, in the greater world of the Hindu spiritual Renaissance embodied in the twin personality of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. In the literary greatness of Rabindranath Tagore we find the spirit of the renaissance unfolding its aspect of imagination. But whatever may be the subsequent development, Rammohan remains the starting-point of modern India.

Born in a *brāhmaṇa* family, in a period when the Mogul Empire was crumbling and the new British Empire forming its nucleus mainly in Bengal and also in some other parts of India, Rammohan had the advantage of studying three cultural forces intermingling and reacting on each other in his lifetime. As an inheritor of three cultures, Rammohan was well-equipped with Sanskrit, Bengali, Arabic, Persian, and English. He could write fluently in all these languages, although from the viewpoint of India today his mastery of English, which

he took to learning after he was thirty, seems astonishing. In fact Rammohan's English prose can be well compared with the best English prose of his time.

Although coming from a conservative Hindu family, Rammohan from his early boyhood showed a natural sympathy for worshipping the one formless God. In later life, while he translated Vedāntic scriptures and wrote so many pamphlets in defence of Hindu theism, one could easily note his indebtedness to Śaṅkarācārya as the sole philosopher on whom he entirely depended to understand the essence of Hinduism. In the context of the state of Hindu religion and society prevailing in his time, his reliance on Vedānta and Śaṅkarācārya was really striking. In the last decade of the nineteenth century we find Swami Vivekananda making Vedānta the creed of our national regeneration. But it seems that Rammohan remained rather a monotheist, in spite of all his intellectual association with Śaṅkara, while in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda we find the acceptance of Vedānta in its entirety, with undeniable special emphasis on monism by them.

In his reference to Rammohan, Swami Vivekananda once observed that three things were important in the message of Rammohan: (1) his acceptance of the Vedānta, (2) his preaching of patriotism, (3) the love that embraced the Muslim equally with the Hindu.[1] It seems that Swamiji himself was influenced by Rammohan in these three aspects, although, actually through the personality of his master Sri Ramakrishna, he knew the futility of quarrelling about the formed and formless God, and realized the spiritual unity of not only Hindu and Muslim, but also of Christian and other ways of worship. Rammohan also had the catholicity of religious tolerance,[2] but his was an intellectual process, which needed the spiritual touch of reality. Here comes the role of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

In another aspect also we find Rammohan's interpretation of Vedānta quite different from that of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. In his famous letter (1823) to Lord Amherst, the then Governor-General of India, Rammohaṇ attacked the very basis of Vedāntic philosophy, while condemning the method of education prevalent at his time. He wrote: 'Nor will youths be fitted to be better members of society by the Vedāntic doctrines which teach them to believe that all visible things have no real existence; that as father, brother, etc. have no actual entity, they consequently deserve no real affection, and therefore the sooner we escape them and leave the world the better.'[3]

Followers of Vedānta will find here a too-simple interpretation of the theory of māyā, which influenced later even such a great thinker as Tagore. From Rammohan to Rabindranath, we find the basis of the Brāhma-sect is in the householders—*Brahma-niṣṭha-gṛhastha* (Brahman-worshipping householders). In India from the days of the Upaniṣads we find numerous instances of *ṛṣis* (seers) who were actually householders. But when one gets fully absorbed in the serene joy of eternal Truth, the outside world becomes meaningless automatically. India has witnessed this in the lives of Buddha, Christ, Śaṅkara, Caitanya, Ramakrishna, and a host of other spiritual personalities. So asceticism or *sannyāsa* (total detachment) is the natural outcome for a spiritual aspirant. But in the Indian scriptures and literature we find other examples

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1 Sister Nivedita: *Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda* (Udbodhan Office, Baghbazar, Calcutta), Chap. II.

2 See *Prārthanāpatra* (1823): written in Bengali by Rammohan Ray.

3 S. D. Collet: *Raja Rammohan Ray*: 1962 ed., Appendix II.

of householders who were real *brahma-jñanins* (knowers of Brahman), for instance Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra, Vyāsa, Janaka, Yājñavalkya, Arjuna, etc. In his preface to the *Īśā-upaniṣad* (1816), Rammohan has himself observed by quoting Vedānta 'that a householder also is required to perform the worship of the Supreme Being'[4]. There is no reason why the modern descendants of the ancient *ṛṣis* of India will not be able to follow them by remaining in their households.

It was for Sri Ramakrishna to break this myth of worldliness and other-worldliness when he once observed, 'Serve all creatures as Śiva Himself.' To a real *jñānin* (knower of God) the whole world is but a manifestation of the Divinity, so there arises no question of abandoning one's near and dear ones. By selfless service one can attain the highest wisdom. We should remember here that Ramakrishna was not only a preacher of Neo-Vedānta, he was also an ascetic or *sannyāsin* in the real sense of the term. Still he apparently did not renounce his mother, wife, or other relatives. In fact, he remained the 'Great Swan', floating on the surface of the world-ocean, remaining himself untouched. Rammohan, too, in a much lesser degree, tried to follow the ideal of the ancient *ṛṣis* of India. There is no doubt of the fact that religion was the inmost core of his life although expressed in a different way.

Rammohan's study of Islam strengthened his views on monotheism, which later found further support from his study of Christianity. Although not a God-intoxicated soul like Ramakrishna, it was he who first inculcated in the dawn of India's modern history the essential unity of religion, which forms the basis of independent India's national policy.

In his universal outlook Rammohan observed not only the unity underlying the different cultural groups of India, but of those throughout the world as a whole. In fact there were very few comparable with him in this world-outlook in his day. Rammohan was born a Bengali; in his outlook he was an Indian; when he died he was already a man comprising in him most of the great ideals of the East and the West.

That our education should be science-oriented and at the same time fully conscious of our spiritual heritage was clearly foreseen by him. Although sometimes he thought that for our political advantage we should reform our religious ideas a bit,[5] still it was clear that he believed in an educational system based on religious ideals. While conversing with Dr. Duff, he once remarked, 'All true education ought to be religious, since the object was not merely to give information, but to develop and regulate all the powers of the mind, the emotions, and the working of the conscience.'[6] It seems that in modern times we have lost this insight regarding education in the name of so-called secular ideals.

As a humanist, Rammohan has a unique position in the history of our renaissance. He was more concerned about his countrymen and humanity as a whole, than most of his contemporaries. His deep concern about the fallen state of Indian womanhood led him to fight against the system of burning widows with their dead husbands. Even though he cited reasons and examples from ancient scriptures, all his inspiration for fighting against that social abuse came more from his heart than from his brain. It was his respect for Indian women, descendants of Gārgī, Maitreyī, Līlāvatī, etc., which stirred the younger generation and thus

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4 Preface to *Īśā-upaniṣad*: *The English Works of Raja Rammohan Ray*, 1906 ed., p. 65.

5 See Letter to John Digby, 1928.

6 Quoted from *Bāṅglār Jāgaraṇ*, in Bengali, by Kazi Abdul Odud, p. 14.

started the liberation movement of women in nineteenth-century Bengal. In this respect the great Vidyasagar followed in his footsteps.

Rammohan and Vidyasagar both have distinguished places in the history of Bengali literature. While Rammohan's approach is altogether didactic and intellectual, Vidyasagar's style is artistic and full of poetic flavour. It is natural that Bengali prose later developed on the Vidyasagarian lines. But it was for Rammohan to clear the way for common men towards the approach to our source-scriptures by his translations and discussions on Vedānta. Since Rammohan, the Upaniṣad has entered with its spiritual depth and poetic beauty into Bengali literature. Devendranath Tagore, the father of Rabindranath, followed Rammohan in this matter and from him this Upaniṣadic spirit developed in Rabindra-literature.

Rammohan's prose style in Bengali reminds one of the Sanskrit system of writing *ṭīkā* (gloss), where a *pūrvapakṣa* (objection) is followed by an *uttarapakṣa* (reply). But what he says is always clear, lucid, sharp, full of inherent humour, although it lacks the spontaneity of Vidyasagar and others. But Bengali prose needed such a strong basis of reason in its early stage. Rammohan is certainly not the Father of Bengali prose, still he is one of its early architects, to whom our literature will remain indebted for ever.

Few people know that Rammohan was a poet with quite a few devotional songs to his credit. Although his songs are preoccupied with the moral aspect of religion and the transitoriness of human life, still in them we find the first examples of modern Bengali classical and devotional songs, which later developed through numerous poets of the Brāhma Samāj, among whom the best example can be found in no other poet than Rabindranath himself.

For better or worse, the central interest of the Indian intelligentsia today is politics rather than religion. In a way, this is one sure sign of the western impact on the Indian way of life. It can be safely said that Rammohan foresaw this political predilection of future India and all his life he was conscious of India's political status and of world politics as a whole.[7] He was a supporter of freedom, of the people's rights whenever and wherever he found occasion to voice his feelings. He felt in his heart of hearts the pangs of a subjugated country, as India then was. Admitting the beneficial role of the British rule, he was aware of India's bright future, when India would rise with all her past heritage of spirituality and assimilate the political and scientific advantages of modern Europe. Throughout his life he fought for the betterment of his motherland, whether within his country, or in England in the last years of his life. He was the first cultural ambassador of resurgent India, accepted with highest honour by the king, the philosopher, the politician, the religious aspirant of England then.

India from Rammohan's time never remained isolated but gradually became one of the most important centres of give-and-take between Asian and European countries. With all his contradictions, Rammohan remained the emblem of unity of culture which was so important for India's regeneration as a whole. Even after two hundred years since his birth, he remains the most modern man of India, in the truest sense of the term.

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[7] We are reminded here of his famous line—'Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been and never will be ultimately successful'—from a letter to John Buckingham, the then editor of the *Calcutta Journal*.



'STRAIGHT AS AN ARROW'

Greatness is freedom from the pettiness and confusion of multiplicity, and expansion into the living unity of Truth. It is far from the complexity and crookedness that belongs to the plane of māyā and it reveals itself in the directness and simplicity of the spiritual, the divine. Great souls are straightforward, upright. Among such Swami Ramakrishnananda was unique. His personality and life could be aptly termed 'Straight as an arrow'.

Even as a young college student, Sasi (that was his premonastic name in a diminutive form) was seriously drawn to God and Truth. His quest after a suitable spiritual guide was genuine, not just a fashionable hobby. That brought him ultimately to Sri Ramakrishna, the illumined Guru. 'Do you believe in God with form, or without ?' was Sri Ramakrishna's probing question to this novitiate. 'Sir, I am unable to say one way or the other for the simple reason that I am not certain of the very existence of God! ' was the startlingly frank answer. No pretension, no prevarication—just the plain truth. Charmed by this honest seeker Sri Ramakrishna straightaway took him under his sheltering care as his disciple.

To Sasi, Sri Ramakrishna was now the Guru, and the scripture says that to the disciple the Guru is divine, nay God Himself.[1] Sasi accepted this injunction in a simple and direct sense, not just figuratively. If the Guru was God, then he must be revered and served as such; his words would be truth and his wishes divine commandments.

Being of a devotional temperament, he was drawn to Sufi poetry, and in order to appreciate it in the original, he started learning Persian. He became absorbed in it, so much so that when once his Guru wanted him for some work he had to call and call repeatedly before he could get his attention. 'Sasi, why this delay ? What were you doing ? ' 'I was studying Persian, Sir.' 'If you forget your duties for the sake of secular studies, you will lose your devotion! ' What was Sasi's reaction ? Painful dilemma : poetry or Guru ? No pain, no dilemma at all. He simply bundled up all the Persian books, went straight to the river Gaṅgā and threw the bundle directly into its waters.

Guru was God—so devotion and service to the Guru must be the foremost spiritual practice. And for Sasi, it would be actually

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1 गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।
गुरुः साक्षात् परं ब्रह्म... ॥

so in its direct and fullest sense. When Sri Ramakrishna was taken fatally ill, due to cancer of throat, his intimate disciples naturally gave up their home and studies in order to be near him, to serve him and make the best use of the days to progress spiritually. Even among them Sasi was unique. To him, the only *sādhanā* (spiritual striving) was to be ever by the side of the Master, the Guru-God—even as his shadow—and to serve him with all his mind, heart and soul. There was no other expectation whatsoever, however exalted. To him the Guru was not the means to some other end, however great and glorious; he was the goal and end itself. The Guru became the Life of his life, the Soul of his soul. The scriptural statement—'The Guru of the universe is my guru; He, the Soul of all creatures, is my soul'[2]—became his living conviction. No wonder that his life became transformed.

To be sure, the Guru was not just the physical person; he was the immortal Presence. That immortal Presence continued to abide even after Sri Ramakrishna shed his mortal frame. Sasi continued to experience, adore and serve this immortal Guru in the shrine, where he felt the Presence tangibly. Unlike others, he did not feel the need of any other pilgrimage, for to him the Master's shrine was the confluence of all holy places. The service at the shrine became such an absorbing life-interest, that he declared, 'I shall spend my whole life in this work. I don't want anything else.' And he did as he said. For more than a decade, never did he leave the spot and, but for a new development, would have continued there all his life.

Before Sri Ramakrishna passed away, he had made Swami Vivekananda the leader of the group of his monastic disciples and placed them all in his charge. So, for Sasi, the Guru lived and worked also through the person of Swamiji. After Swamiji's long absence and return from the West in 1897, when the two brother-disciples met, Swamiji said, 'Sasi, you must go to Madras and start a centre there for propagating the Master's message. I have promised the people there accordingly.' Swami Ramakrishnananda did not rebel and refuse to leave the spot so dear and sacred to him. He offered no excuse; he accepted the assignment readily. The Guru had spoken through Swamiji. He would continue the same service to the Master at Madras as well. So he straightaway proceeded to Madras, and with his characteristic dedication gave himself to the assignment for the rest of his life; he literally sacrificed himself for the task.

He lived and died for his Guru-God. All the credit and the glory of the work belonged to the Guru. When new monastery buildings came up, at the time of occupation his remarks were, 'This is a fine house for the *Master* to live in. We shall work here and teach *his* precepts.' And that teaching he did with the utmost vigour, without fear or favour of anyone. He taught the ideals of renunciation and service; he taught that genuine religion was impossible without renouncing *kāma-kāñcana*, lust and greed. The message of the Master went home and several young men were inspired. But that displeased some of the big wigs; they became nervous lest the young men, who were the future hope of their families, should actually take to the life of renunciation. They implored the Swami to change his teachings. Otherwise, they threatened, they would withdraw their support to the monastery. But this gave the Swami no sleepless nights; neither did he resort to any diplomatic compromise. His response was simple and direct:

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2 मन्नाथः श्रीजगन्नाथः मद्गुरुः श्रीजगद्गुरुः ।
मदात्मा सर्वभूतात्मा... ॥

'Am I to preach any other thing than what I have learnt from my Master? Certainly not. Let these people do what they will. I may be ousted from this place. (At that time the monastery was located in a devotee's house.) But what does it matter? I shall gladly find accommodation in one of my students' houses, maybe on the portico, and shall continue the Lord's work there!'

Similarly when a rich merchant spoke irreverently of the great Ācārya Śaṅkara, for whom the Swami had the greatest reverence, he flared up and rebuked the man then and there. Other friends became afraid that the man would withdraw his large contributions to the monastery. Not so the Swami. 'The Lord's work does not depend on the money of such men,' was his simple reaction.

His life of devotion, too, was based on the same simple and direct approach. 'We are God's children—not servants! Always think of yourselves as his children,' was his precept and practice. As soon as he came to the monastery at Belur, the first thing he did was to proceed directly to the shrine—without even the formality of washing etc.—to meet and greet the Master and report to him. The worship in the shrine was to him no mechanical ceremonial; it was direct service to the Living Presence. So he was very particular that every item of the shrine-service should be attended to with the utmost care and punctuality. In this regard he would not tolerate any deviation. As a true devotee, he would take that food only which was offered to the Master and had become consecrated as *prasāda*. This he did even during his worst illness. He refused to take any 'diet' which could not be offered in the shrine, whatever the consequence.

As a result of such rigorous austerity and strenuous work, his body broke down. He was taken to Belur Math, the headquarters of the Order,—and later to Udbodhan Office at Calcutta—for treatment. Even there he had no thought of himself. The treatment and the results were the responsibility of the Master and his living representatives. When the treatments failed to bring any improvement, an optimistic physician requested the Swami to be given a chance to try his treatment. Even at that point, the Swami did not change his attitude. 'Let the authorities—the representatives of the Master—decide. I have no opinion of my own!'

Even during that most excruciating illness, his mind rested on the Master in all directness and simplicity. A 'Kavirāj', a native physician, was trying to elicit certain information from the patient, certain psychological data, as part of the traditional procedure: 'In your dreams, do you see a cremation ground, *tulasī* (holy basil) grove etc.? (such dreams being considered auspicious and prognosticating recovery)' Direct came the reply, 'No, I don't see any of these. I frequently see the Master, the Holy Mother and Swamiji.' No half-gods in this pure mind—only God!

The Swami's teaching and training of the devotees and disciples was also of the same upright and straight kind. He would severely discourage political discussions and gossip and their source, namely the newspapers, in the precincts of the monastery. 'Pray put away that newspaper,' he would admonish. 'You can read it anywhere else. When you come here, you should think of God and spiritual matters.'

Sister Devamātā, an American monastic, was convalescing. Among those who came to visit her was a high official who started retailing some gossip in order to cheer her up. The Swami started fidgeting in his chair. 'Sir, are you not feeling well?' the Sister enquired anxiously. But calmly the Swami replied, '*I* am all right but I don't like *your* conversation!' Needless to say that the conversation changed.

In tune with his Master's precepts, 'which conveyed the highest truths in simple language', the Swami's own teaching too was simple and direct. He never encouraged the 'mysterious' and the 'occult'. 'Mystery is weakness. There should not be anything mysterious connected with religion....God is in no way a mysterious Being. He is clearer than day, than the sun. When a man is physically weak, he takes to cunning. When he is spiritually weak, he takes to mystery,' was his unambiguous declaration.

Equally forthright was his devotion to truth. While he was all kindness, he would not hesitate to sacrifice the merely pleasant if it came in the way. He preferred the simple and direct light of truth and God to the colourful blandishment and seductions of māyā and worldliness. When a disciple, under training, tried to draw his attention one evening to an unusually beautiful sunset, his classic reply was, 'This is the hour when we should be thinking of God, not of his creation!'

But, he was by no means puritanical and dry. Sweet and serene was his nature. The key to this sweetness, however, was not a training based on worldly culture with its elements of calculating politeness, evasive cunning, and puerile pleasantry. It was his utter lack of egotism and complete self-surrender to God, which again was the favourite theme of his teachings: 'Man is too often afraid to surrender. He thinks he will lose something but when he gives himself *absolutely* to God, he never loses.' 'Find God and forget yourself.' 'Surrender yourself completely to Him. A smile will always play on your lips and your face will be shining. Your mind will be calm and peaceful.' That was the man, given to God in all directness and simplicity.

Like the arrow described by the *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*,[3] he had made God his sole goal and target, gone towards it straight and unerringly and became absorbed in it, 'become one with it'.

Source:

The Story of a Dedicated Life
Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

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[3] प्रणवो धनुः शरो ह्यात्मा ब्रह्म तल्लक्ष्यमुच्यते ।
अप्रमत्तेन वेद्धव्यं शरवत्तन्मयो भवेत् ।। II.ii.4

Om is the bow; the Ātman is the arrow; Brahman is said to be the mark. It is to be struck by an undistracted mind. Then the Ātman becomes one with Brahman, as the arrow with the target.

In order to realize God you must worship him with your whole heart; and the man who has realized God is perfectly happy. Even if he should go to hell, he would be in heaven, for he lives in God, and where God is, that is heaven.

—*Swami Ramakrishnananda*

WALKING ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

WHAT THE UPANISAD TEACHES

The seer of the Upaniṣads, after having followed the spiritual path and after having realized the Supreme Spirit, spoke in these terms: 'The sharp edge of a razor is difficult to pass over. So is the path to the realization of the Supreme Spirit—the true Self of us all.'[1] However, through proper training, even the most difficult path may be followed and the supreme goal attained. This is what the ancient Hindu philosophical and spiritual teachers declare in the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad.*

To quote the Upaniṣad again :

> 'Know the Ātman to be the master of the chariot, and the body as the chariot. Consider the intellect (*buddhi*) as the charioteer, and the mind as the rein. The senses, they say, are the horses and the roads are the sense-objects. The wise call him (the Ātman) the enjoyer when he is united with the body, the senses, and the mind.[2]
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> 'One who is always of unrestrained mind, devoid of discrimination, has his senses uncontrollable like the wicked horses of a charioteer. But he who is always of restrained mind, has right discrimination, has his senses controllable like the good horses of a charioteer. He who is devoid of right discrimination, who is thoughtless and always impure, never attains the goal and gets into the round of births and deaths. But he who is associated with a discriminating intellect, ever pure, with the mind controlled, reaches that goal whence none is born again. The man who has a discriminating intellect for his charioteer and the mind as the well-controlled reins, attains the end of the road—the supreme experience of the all-pervading Spirit.
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> 'The (subtle) sense-objects are superior to the senses. The mind is superior to the sense-objects. The intellect is superior to the mind. The Cosmic Spirit (Great Ātman), again, is superior to the intellect ; the Unmanifest is higher than the Cosmic Spirit ; *Puruṣa* is superior to the Unmanifest. But nothing is superior to the *Puruṣa,* the infinite transcendental Spirit. This Ātman, the Self of man, hidden in all beings, reveals Itself not to all, but is seen only by the subtle seers through their pointed and subtle intellects. The wise man should merge his speech in his mind, and his mind in his intellect. He should merge the intellect in the Cosmic Spirit, and the Cosmic Spirit in the Self of Peace, the transcendental Spirit.'[3]

And here the teacher, addressing the disciple, says : 'Having approached the enlightened teachers, arise, awake, and realize the Self—realize the Ātman. Like the sharp edge of a razor, so the wise say, is the path of self-realization—difficult to cross and hard to tread.'

'Having realized that infinite Spirit which is soundless, intangible, formless, imperishable, ... one is freed from the jaws of death and one attains the highest peace and bliss.'[4]

As we read these passages, we comprehend why our spiritual teachers place before us the highest ideal and also speak to us of the necessity of acquiring proper qualifications without which no spiritual realization is possible, without which even the spiritual path may prove to be dangerous. But with the required training, one can reach the goal ultimately.

NEED OF TRAINING FOR WALKING ON THE RAZOR'S-EDGE-PATH

Many people are afraid of following the spiritual path. Now, if we have

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[1] See *Kaṭha-upaniṣad,* I. iii. 14.
[2] ibid., I. iii. 3-4.
[3] ibid., 5-13.
[4] ibid., 15.

the real training, we need not be afraid at all. Is it merely a child's play to drive a motorcar? Is it possible for an untrained person to fly an airplane or to skate or ski? No. These are all dangerous sports and pastimes, but if one is properly trained one may do all these with great control and grace. Spiritual practices are extremely necessary if we want to live in the world rightly and want to make spiritual progress.

In November 1882 Sri Ramakrishna, the great Prophet of modern India, went to see a circus in Calcutta in the company of Rakhal (later Swami Brahmananda) and some other devotees. At the circus there were exhibitions of various feats. One of these impressed the Master greatly. A horse raced around a circular track over which large iron rings were hung at intervals. The circus rider, an Englishwoman, stood on one foot on the horse's back, and as the horse passed under the rings, she jumped through them, always alighting on one foot on the horse's back. The horse raced around the entire circle, and the woman never missed the horse or lost her balance. This feat, to be sure, took years of practice to accomplish. The Master enjoyed it. It reminded him of what one should do in one's spiritual life. Sri Ramakrishna asked one of the devotees present: 'Did you see how that Englishwoman stood on one foot on her horse, while it ran like lightning? How difficult a feat that must be! She must have practised a long time. The slightest carelessness and she would break her arms or legs; she might even be killed. One faces the same difficulty leading the life of a householder. A few succeed in it through the grace of God and as a result of their spiritual practice. But most people fail. Entering the world, they become more and more involved in it; they drown in worldliness and suffer the agonies of death. Fortunately a few have succeeded, through the power of austerity, in leading the spiritual life as householders. Therefore spiritual practice is extremely necessary; otherwise one cannot rightly live in the world.' Not only that, one may suffer from many agonies without the balance and peace one may obtain through spiritual practices.

As in every walk of life, so also in spiritual life, there are dangers to be avoided and obstacles to be overcome. And do you know what is the greatest obstacle in spiritual life? It is the tendency to live a fashionable religion. This is possible so long as one does not have spiritual hunger. But when this hunger is born in the soul, one yearns for divine realization. One cannot then sit quiet. One is urged to follow the spiritual path which takes him nearer and nearer to the ultimate goal. Our teachers tell us that the human birth is a great privilege. Having attained this human birth if a person just leads the life of an animal it is a pity.

One may read no end of books. One may listen to no end of lectures. But if one's mind is not inclined to the spiritual ideal, everything has been in vain. So, in India, the spiritual teachers tell us: 'You must have the grace of your own mind.' It is not enough if we have the grace of God and the grace of a teacher. We might have been fortunate in receiving many spiritual instructions, but unless we have the grace of our own minds everything comes to nothing. Our mind must be open to Truth. Now, even if the mind is open to Truth, even if we possess a real love for the spiritual ideal, training is necessary. Good training is necessary even in worldly pursuits. We cannot do any work of any kind without the necessary education, the necessary practice. And the same is true of spiritual life.

Here is an anecdote to illustrate the point:

> 'A young man who had no special training was overanxious to get a position as an executive, and he went to a

bank, saw one of the Vice-presidents and told him he would like very much to get a good job—the job of an executive. The official who was interviewing the young man said : "I am very sorry, we have none. We already have twelve Vice-presidents !" The young man, undaunted, replied : "I have no superstition about the number—I don't mind becoming the thirteenth." '

Well, Vice-presidents are not made that way. They are to be trained. Similarly, if you want to rise to the highest, want to walk, as the spiritual teacher says, 'on the edge of the razor' you need special training. You will be cut to pieces if you make the attempt without it. But if you are properly trained, there is absolutely no fear and you may even find pleasure in walking on the edge of the razor.

We all know what happens to a weak electric wire when a high-voltage electric current is passed through it. The wire will burn up. Similarly, when without proper preparation we want to be in tune with the Cosmic Spirit, so great will be the pressure that our body, our nerves, our mind will not be able to bear it. This is a fact. So, in order to follow the spiritual path, we need a strong body ; we need strong senses, mind, and intellect. Otherwise all our struggle will end in failure.

The 'Sphinx' Within

The biological laws of struggle for existence and survival of the fittest hold good in the spiritual world also. In the animal world, animals fight animals. In the lower human world, men fight men and the strongest only survive. In the domain of spiritual life, the fight is not between man and man, but between the lower and higher natures of man. And we all know what it is—how our higher nature and our lower nature go on fighting and fighting and bring us no end of misery.

In Greek mythology, the Sphinx is a monster having typically a lion's body and the head of a woman. The Sphinx of Thebes, they say, used to ask the Thebans to guess a riddle. She used to strangle those who failed to give the correct answer to the following question : 'What walks on four feet in the morning, on two at noon, and on three in the evening ? ' Oedipus, it is said, solved the riddle by saying, 'Man crawls on all fours as a baby, walks upright in the prime of life, and uses a staff in old age.' Now, we are told, upon hearing the correct answer, the Sphinx flung herself to death, and Oedipus became king of Thebes.

In Egyptian mythology, the Sphinx has a lion's body and a man's head. The Roman Sphinx of a later period sometimes has a man's and sometimes a woman's head. Well, the Sphinx represents us all—men and women. Indeed, we men and women are all strange creatures. We combine both animal and human elements in our character, and these elements hide the Spirit. When the Sphinx asks, 'What are you ?', are we able to answer ? If we can each answer 'I am the Spirit', the Sphinx in us would die. Then we would experience the awakening of self-knowledge, the coming of the knowledge of the true man—the Self—the Spirit in us, and this strange personality, the combination of opposites, would disappear.

Try to be Cosmo-centric

Let us now turn to the analogy we read in the Upaniṣads:

The soul is the master of the chariot ;
The body is the chariot .
The senses are the horses ;
The mind is the reins ;
The intellect is the charioteer.

But when we look within our chariot and see what the team-mates are doing, we will be shocked. We find that the soul is drunk. Intellect, the charioteer, has fallen unconsci-

ous; the reins of the mind have become slack; the senses, the horses, are running wild. And a great disaster awaits the chariot, the horses, and their master unless something is done right away in bringing about a new order. Our teachers tell us that owing to ignorance our soul, the master of the chariot, has identified himself too much with the intellect, the mind, the senses, and the body. He considers himself to be the enjoyer. He has forgotten his true nature.

Patañjali, the ancient teacher of yoga, tells us that ignorance makes the soul forget its true spiritual nature[5] and then the soul starts dreaming false dreams, creating no end of fantasy, and also spends its time in sleep and dwelling on past memories. Every moment the soul wants to run away from itself. That is what ignorance does. Ignorance breeds egotism, attachment, and aversion, creates in man a tremendous clinging to life. Because of this clinging to life, he behaves in strange ways.

For furthering our own petty interests, we do not mind harming others. We tell lies. We sometimes would like even to steal what others possess. We live a wild, sensuous life and often we also live like the parasite, depending too much on others. In spiritual life we should start making a change. We should learn how to practise harmlessness, sympathy, truthfulness, non-greediness, chastity, and independence. We are too lazy to remain clean physically and mentally. We are always full of discontent, grumbling, and complaints against everyone, and we want to lead an easy-going life. In our modern days we read quite a lot of books. Our reading is desultory. We fill our brain with no end of other people's thoughts and these thoughts, remaining as foreign matter, create mental indigestion. And then our whole life is egocentric. What should we do?

Our teachers tell us: 'Try to be clean in body and mind. Try to be cheerful. Try to follow an amount of asceticism. Do not be too soft. Instead of doing desultory reading and permitting our mind to wander from one thing to another, do some deep study and thinking. Instead of remaining egocentric, try to offer all the fruits of your labour to the Divine who is the Eternal Guide of all and dwells everywhere.' But we do not listen. We entertain most disharmonious thoughts and emotions. We perform mostly crude actions, and even if we have started the spiritual life, we fall a prey to various diseases caused by bad emotions. We feel helpless at times. We have no energy left. We vacillate. We cannot decide. Our mind and body are full of *tamas*, dullness. Now, what should we do? We must try to turn over a new leaf. Patañjali, the teacher of yoga, says whenever these obstructions arise, try to think of the Spirit. Try to create in you a higher mood because of which you may rise above the lethargy—the vacillation, and so on—that characterizes your present life. We are unstable, we are unreliable, and that is one of the greatest troubles we all suffer from. We cannot trust ourselves fully and that is the greatest difficulty.

Our spiritual teachers advise us to overcome these obstacles one by one. But later on they say: 'After having attained an amount of moral practice, become cosmocentric. Try to think more and more of the Supreme Spirit who dwells in your heart. Repeat the divine name, meditate on the Supreme Spirit—the Teacher of teachers—and you will see you will be able to rise above your egocentric nature.' By thinking of the Infinite one comes to have something of the Infinite's nature. Through perfection of the repetition of the divine name and meditation, the Supreme Spirit becomes manifest. Then one succeeds in attaining

5 See *Yoga-sūtras*, II. 5.

the union between the individual soul and the Supreme Spirit.

Wanted Minimum Moral Qualification

The teacher of the Upaniṣads speaks to us in the same strain. Sages have freed themselves from defects and impurities and have realized their resplendent Self who dwells right in the heart. The teachers of Vedānta, like the teachers of yoga, go into great details. They want us to have good bodies, strong, healthy senses, mind, and intellect. Without these, one can never succeed in following the spiritual path and achieving something substantial in the world of the Spirit.

The teachers speak to us of defects of the body and the senses. The body is disharmonious. The various organs of the body do not function properly. They do not work in harmony. Something is to be done. There are also the defects of the senses which possess the tendency to run, come in touch with their objects. These defects are to be got rid of. Again, there are diseases of the mind: desire, doubt, indecision, dullness, lack of concentration. These taint the mind. Then, too, there are other defects of the mind: wrong understanding, too much of vanity, seeing and understanding things in the wrong light. Now all of these defects are to be removed. So here, too, like the teachers of yoga, the teachers of Vedānta declare: 'Try to have minimum moral and spiritual qualification. Learn to discriminate. Think clearly. Learn to find out what is real and what is unreal, what is changing and what is permanent, what just lasts for a few days and then what stays on. Practise, as much as you can, the control of the senses as well as the control of the mind. Learn to withdraw yourself from things you do not want to come in touch with. Have great perseverance and great faith. Develop faith in your true self, faith in the Divine Spirit, faith in the teachings you are following, and faith in your possibilities to realize the truth. And along with that, try to practise simple forms of concentration.' As already pointed out, all spiritual teachers in all ages, in all religions, speak to us of the necessity of practising purity. Christian mystics call it purgation. This is the first step. In order to follow this spiritual path successfully, what we need is minimum moral qualities.

Wanted not Physical but Inner Beauty

What matters most, our teachers tell us, in spiritual life is not the beauty of the physical form, but the beauty of the mind, harmony of the mind. We must develop the capacity of the mind to penetrate into the deepest facts of life. We need beauty of the mind.

There is an anecdote about President Lincoln who was not a good-looking person.

> 'Once a Philadelphian delegation went to meet President Lincoln, and they introduced one of their members, saying: "He has been good enough to paint and present to our League Room a most beautiful portrait of yourself." President Lincoln thought it over and turning to the painter said: "I presume, sir, in painting your beautiful portrait you took your idea of me from my principles and not from my person."'

And that is what is needed. The purity of mind and heart reflects itself on the body. I have seen most homely persons possessing a remarkable grace that most beautiful bodies cannot possess. Besides, pure and illuminated souls radiate holy and harmonious vibrations which have not only a pleasant but also an elevating influence on all those who come in touch with them.

As I have mentioned already, our spiritual teachers are very much concerned about making us properly qualified to follow the higher spiritual life, for without it

we cannot walk on the razor's edge.

The defects of the body, the disharmonious functioning of the body are to be removed. The ancient teacher of the Upaniṣads prayed with his disciples: 'May all my limbs become perfected, may all the members of my body become harmonious'. When this harmony is attained, we shall feel that it is a pleasure to live in the body. All the members of the body must become harmonious. Avoid unhealthy food, live a regulated, temperate life; perform selfless work, lead a moral life. Harmonious thoughts and actions make the body harmonious.

The defects of the senses are to be removed by withdrawing them from evil objects and diverting them along right lines. This is no repression or suppression. Hear and see what is good, pure, spiritual. Use your senses so that instead of impoverishing they enrich you by bringing to you, as the great teachers say, 'good food for the mind'.

The defects of the mind are to be got rid of by living a life guided not by impulses but by higher reason and right reflection. We should avoid what is harmful and acquire what is helpful to our spiritual life. What is helpful may be very unpleasant, but still we must have it, and by following that rule, to a great extent we succeed in removing the defects of the mind.

Want to Become Pure? Then Take Hold of the Self

Mind gives us indeed various kinds of troubles, especially when we want to control it. We find sometimes it is too dull. It does not want to move. Again, it is mad, running from one thing to another. And even if sometimes the dense mind remains a little quiet, it again starts its mad course. Through training, this mad mind can be made concentrated. Our teachers tell us that our food should be pure. The food that we eat through the mouth should be pure. It should produce a harmony in the body. Similarly, the food that we take through all our senses must be pure. That helps us to build up a finer subtle body. The food that we take through our mind—all our thoughts and emotions—also should be pure to help us to build a harmonious subtle body. We have a saying: you may feed the snake with the most wonderful health foods, vegetarian foods; the snake will manufacture only poison—nothing but poison, if it is a poisonous snake. And that is very true.

Various are the defects we suffer from. Now, the defects are there. Are we going to remove these defects one by one? Some psychologists tell us to relax the head, then relax the ears, relax the nose, relax the hands, relax the trunk, and relax the feet, and so on. That is one way. There is a better way of practising relaxation. Get hold of your whole undivided self and then, when your mind and heart are full of peace, relaxation comes as a matter of course. Similarly, let us learn to think of ourselves not as body, not as the senses, not as the mind, but as the soul.

There is an anecdote of a miser who was about to die. And a priest came to save him. He was saving him limb by limb. He charged a certain fee for saving the hands and then saving the head, saving the trunk, saving the left leg. Finally the priest thought, 'Now I am going to charge him a lot as he is escaping us.' He said aloud, 'Now I am going to ask a large sum for your right leg.' The dying man, who was full of worldly calculation, blushingly said, 'Sir, that is a wooden leg.'

Well, that is one way of saving—limb by limb. Our teachers tell us: 'Take hold of your soul. Awaken the consciousness that you are the spirit and then your moral life, your spiritual life, will become easier. Have faith that you are the spirit, whether you know it fully or not. Try to strengthen

your faith and it works like a miracle.'

Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna's greatest disciple, gives this advice: 'Teach yourself, teach everyone his real nature. Purity will come, glory will come, all that is good will come when the sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.' Not to try to save oneself limb by limb, but to try to take hold of the indivisible Self. That is the first real step.

Power of Concentration Without Purity Might Prove Dangerous

Desires do not leave us all of a sudden. We may practise great control. We may cut ourselves off from the objects of desire, but the desire remains in the subtle form. This desire will disappear only with the dawn of spiritual consciousness, and so we should try our best to awaken in us something of this spiritual consciousness.

Here is an instruction that we should try to remember always. It is dangerous to practise concentration before the attainment of minimum purity. Before we practise concentration or store up our energy, we must know how to direct this energy along higher channels; otherwise we may come to grief.

In India we have a parable:

> A man learned how to invoke the demon. He uttered some incantations and the demon made his appearance and said: 'Now give me work.' He asked the demon to do certain things and in no time those things were finished. The demon appeared again and demanded: 'Give me work, otherwise I shall break your neck', and the man did not know what to do. He had called the demon and he must give him some work to do. Then an idea struck him. Turning to the demon he said: 'Well, try to straighten this dog's curly tail.'

We call up our energy and we do not know how to utilize it. This energy is frittered away in doing useless things and this will be a great tragedy in spiritual life. We must know how to give this energy a higher turn. Otherwise this stored up energy may stimulate our desires, may stimulate our senses; and, if we do not succeed in giving these desires a higher turn, they may become like bombshells and wreck our body and mind. It is dangerous to try to play at concentration and meditation. But, if we are properly trained, if we have the minimum qualifications, it is a joy to live a life of concentration and meditation.

If the energy is not properly directed, sometimes it may express itself as psychic powers. Probably we have learned to read other people's thoughts. We can know something of what is going to happen in the future, but we remain ignorant as to our own mind, as to our own spiritual nature. The ideal of spiritual life is to know *what* we are. If one has attained the necessary purity by following the methods described before, then this stored up energy can be used in performing selfless work, in doing prayer, in practising concentration and meditation. And all these then help us to move towards the Truth.

Surrender to the Higher Being

In order to follow the spiritual path with success, the defects of the intellect and the ego also are to be removed. By persistently following the right path and strengthening the mind the will becomes strong, and we certainly need a strong will for attaining success in spiritual life.

When temptations assail us, when all the desires that lie in our subconscious mind appear before us and tempt us, we need a strong will. We must be able to follow the spiritual path, rising above all the various temptations that are sure to come to each and every spiritual seeker. And one thing we must remember in our spiritual

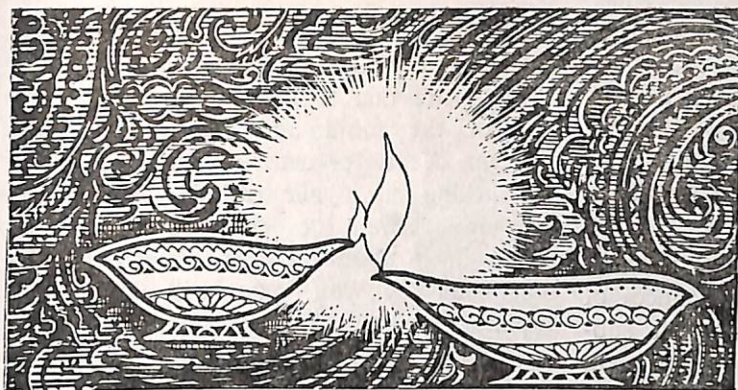
life is this. Egocentric moral and spiritual striving is not enough. So the teachers of yoga, as well as the teachers of Vedānta, tell us: 'Along with the practise of disciplines one must also try to surrender the fruits of one's activities to Īśvara.' To the yogī He is the Teacher of teachers. This Teacher of teachers is not far away from us. He dwells in every heart. In the West one does not very much appreciate God as the Teacher of teachers, but in India we do. Our parents bring us into the world, but our spiritual teachers help us to be born in the realm of spirit and help us to go beyond birth and death, misery and sorrow. In Vedānta God—the Supreme Spirit—is not only the Teacher of teachers but also the Soul of all souls.

Each one of us is a part of the infinite Spirit. As the mind and heart become pure, whether in the initial stage we believe in a Cosmic Spirit or not, we come to get hold of our individual undivided self. As we move further and further, we find that we are all really parts of a greater whole and this is the greatest truth we need. We, as souls, are inseparable parts of this Oversoul, this Supreme Spirit. This Ātman, as we have read in the Upaniṣad, is hidden in the hearts of all. It is seen only by the subtle seers. This Ātman cannot be seen by the senses, cannot be known by the mind. How did the subtle seers realize the Self? Through the power of intuition. A strange faculty is lying hidden in everyone of us. It is the faculty of the soul. It is the faculty by which the soul knows itself, by which it directly knows the Oversoul. Through moral practices, through prayers, through meditation this dormant faculty is to be unfolded and then spiritual life becomes easy. It is then that the spiritual aspirant may say that he is walking on the edge of the razor. In him there awakens a great power of discrimination between the real and the unreal. And with this razor of discrimination he removes from himself all that is non-self. He cuts himself off from body-consciousness, sense-consciousness, mind-consciousness, and intellect-consciousness. He realizes that he is the Spirit and as Spirit he is an inseparable part of the Supreme Spirit, the Soul of all souls. Here, having attained the highest purity, having dissociated itself from all things that are material, mental, and emotional, the soul can walk on the razor's edge, and become united with the Oversoul. That is what is experienced by illuminated seers.

Now, we may very well ask the question: 'What of ourselves?' We can be seers not simply by wishing but by following in the footsteps of those who realized the Supreme Spirit, who walked on the edge of the razor, who divested themselves from all that is non-Spirit and realized the Supreme Spirit. Following in their footsteps, we may make a humble beginning in our spiritual life.

Let us try to awaken in us the consciousness that we are Spirit. Let us try to feel that we are all parts of the one Oversoul. Let us feel that the body is our chariot, the senses are our horses, our mind the reins, and the intellect the charioteer. Let us learn to have full control over this chariot. Following in the footsteps of the illuminated souls, let us possess the right understanding, let us restrain the mind, let us control the senses, let us follow steadily the path of spiritual realization. Let us awake. Let us arise. Let us follow the spiritual path step by step. Let us try to realize the true Self, the Self of all. Let us not stop till the Goal is reached.

By walking on the razor's edge, by strictly following the spiritual path, let us attain illumination and bliss, and also help others to walk on the razor's edge, to follow the spiritual path and attain the same illumination and bliss.



ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

TRUE RENUNCIATION

(Continued from the previous issue)

Hearing these words of wisdom from the Brahmin boy, Śikhidhvaja with a tearful countenance began to say:

'O Divine child! After a long time, I am today awakened from my mistaken path. Through my foolishness I have given up the company of the holy men and have come to live in the forest. Now you are my guru, my spiritual father and friend. I am your disciple. Be pleased to show your mercy to me. Tell me the supreme Truth which would conduce to my well-being and knowing which I will have desire for nothing else.'

Cūḍālā: 'If my words be of any good to you, listen attentively. It is true that you have renounced your family, friends, relatives, and your kingdom, but just as the clear autumn sky is on the outside unobstructed by any clouds, yet is surcharged with fine particles of water vapour, so you, even after giving up all external possessions, have not been able to free yourself from the subtle ignorance in the form of the internal egoistic idea. It is no reason that because you have renounced your family and kingdom you should as a necessary sequel attain to the state of supreme Bliss. That state is one of positive self-existent Bliss, attained after much effort. When the internal knot of your heart in the form of the subtle ego-idea will, by your continuous dwelling upon it, attain big proportions, all your renunciation of the external possessions of kingdom etc., will be rendered futile. How is total renunciation possible for him in whose heart even a jot of the idea of ego dwells? The loss of the idea of egoistic desire and possession is the real fruit of renunciation. When you have not been able to estimate your renunciation by the measure of absence of egoistic feeling, then both renunciation and absence of desire have fled from you. Starting to renounce with a detached heart you have in the end become bound in the egoistic idea of renunciation. Engaged in futile austerities, impelled by an excessive desire for mortification, you have paved the way for your own miseries. He who giving up the near and ever-present infinite bliss of the Supreme goes after excessive mortification for the attainment of a finite object, for the satisfaction of the idea of having renounced, is a self-killer. O Holy man! Having given up the bondage of your kingdom, you have fallen in the more terrible bondage of the ego and its impulses. The restlessness and disquietude of the mind you had while in your kingdom have been doubled by the

thoughts and vain imaginings of your austerities in the forest.'

Śikhidhvaja: 'O Youth! Yes, it is true, but I cannot understand your words that having given up family and wealth and kingdom, I have not been able to renounce anything.'

Cūḍālā: 'O Hermit! Wife, home, wealth, kingdom, land, the circumstances of royalty—these do not belong to your subjective Self; why then in renouncing them do you attribute to yourself the egoistic idea of having renounced? The subtle internal desire in the form of the ego-idea is still reigning within you. By giving up this internal desire, this idea of me and mine, this tentacle of selfishness which the ego throws out to grasp external objects as one's own, you will reach the supreme state beyond all grief.'

Śikhidhvaja: 'Sir, perhaps there are possessions nearer to me which are a distraction for me from complete renunciation, a bar to the supreme Bliss. The kingdom etc. are not mine but I may have the idea of possession for this forest of trees and creepers; therefore I now draw back all idea of possession from this forest.'

Cūḍālā: 'The hills, the forests, the trees, and water are not in reality yours, but by your mind, you grasp and ascribe them to you. How then by giving up that which is not yours can you impute to yourself the idea of having renounced? A far stronger bond than that in the form of the internal idea of "me and mine", its grasping of external objects as constitutive of the Self, is yet un-renounced by you. If you can give up your love for the ego-idea, you will attain the supreme state beyond all grief.'

Śikhidhvaja: 'These are not mine, but this hut of leaves is mine, and I root out all idea of possession with regard to it. Now I have reached complete renunciation.'

Cūḍālā: 'These trees, creepers and shrubs, and your hut are not yours really, but you are tied to them only through the link of the mind and the ego. A far stronger desire for sense-objects than these is lurking in your mind. When this extreme desire for sense-objects which pivots itself upon the idea of ego will be renounced by you, you will attain the supreme Bliss.'

Śikhidhvaja: 'If there is still a trace of the idea of possession in me, then this hut and its thatch, this staff, water-pot, deer-skin are not mine; I renounce them also.'

Saying this he collected all his things of use and set fire to them. The fire consumed all the things of the king. Then he, in a bare body and with a pleased mind said:

'O Divine child, now I have reached the height of renunciation. I have nothing left to call my own. I am very happy.'

Cūḍālā: 'You are falsely imputing to yourself the supreme Bliss by the mistaken idea of giving up everything. You have not been able to renounce everything. The strong knot of the mind, the root of egoistic desire and possession by which you grasp external objects as your own and superimpose them on the Self, is still predominant in you.'

Hearing these words the king thought for a while and said:

'Even now this body of flesh and blood, surrounded by the limbs and sense-organs, is remaining to me. By throwing myself down from on high I will destroy this body. Then surely I shall have renounced everything.'

Saying this the king rose to throw himself down into the neighbouring ravine. Cūḍālā obstructed him and said:

'This body is inert. There is no chance of any evil to you from this inert body. As a log of wood is drifted by the waves, so this body is driven by another (agent or power). It has no independent power of

its own but if you can renounce that which is afflicting your body, by which you have imposed the body-idea on yourself, then your renunciation will be complete. Otherwise even by your destroying the body it will sprout up again and again. Renunciation is not compassed by the destruction of the body, the sacrifice of the kingdom, or the burning of the hut. The renunciation of that from which the idea of egoistic possession and feeling with regard to them has arisen—the seed and producer of all—is complete renunciation.'

Śikhidhvaja : 'What is that thing which is the producer and seed of all ?'

Cūḍālā : 'The *citta*—the ego-mind and the sense-mind and the limiting adjuncts which they superimpose on the Self—is that all-productive principle of nescience. The renunciation of *citta* is the complete renunciation of finite sense-objects. The *citta* is the field for the sprouting of the *saṁsāra* (relative existence). When that field is rendered barren and infertile, how can the seeds sprout ? Therefore, O wise one, ponder well what is the real object of renunciation (namely, the ego and its ascriptions) and then renouncing that give up even the egoistic imputation to yourself of having renounced.'

Śikhidhvaja : 'I have many times tried to give up *citta*, still I have not been able to renounce it. It has insistently beseiged me with its finite sense-objects and egoistic feeling with regard to them. First indicate to me the nature of the *citta* and then speak about the way of abjuring it.'

Cūḍālā : 'Desire and the idea of egoistic possession is the nature of the *citta*. The word *citta* is but a synonym of desire. The ignorance of the Ātman is the seed for the tree of *citta*. Who am I ? How have I come to have my present mental ascriptions and limiting adjuncts—by such a discrimination of the Reality, the tree of *citta* is consumed by the flame of knowledge. Therefore destroy by the fire of knowledge the seed of desire.'

Śikhidhvaja : 'O Serene one ! I have repeatedly thought and discriminated, that I am not the earth, the hills, the forests, the movements of the leaves, this body of flesh and blood, the organs of sensation or knowledge, the mind, the *buddhi* (intelligence), or the ego. These are all inert and derived principles. Afterwards I have found that there is one conscious Self which is the primal source and cause of these substances, like trees and shrubs. Thus trying to break down the limiting barriers of the ego and wash away its impurities of the mind, I cannot yet know the Supreme Self, the essence of Bliss who is beyond these limitations. Therefore I am much afflicted by the sorrow of the mind.'

Cūḍālā : 'Really there is no independent, original substance called the *citta,* the ego and the sense-mind. What appears as the mind, its finite thoughts and desires, is but the infinite intelligence and bliss of the Self. There is no world as such, no finite objects you see, but all is the one Brahman. It is futile for you to seek to renounce the finite objects and the desires of the mind for them without substituting in their place the vision of the Reality—the Brahman ; for they are not independent and underived, but derivations and limitations of the bliss and consciousness and reality of Brahman. Only by inducing the vision of Reality, of Brahman, are they truly and successfully renounced. You are in reality stainless and unchanging. That which has no beginning, no end, that which is ever the same, devoid of birth, growth and decay, which is without any stain, a partial manifestation of which is the world, which is at the source of all as the Primal Existence,—you are that Reality, the Ātman.'

Hearing these words of Cūḍālā, the king Śikhidhvaja with a delightful heart and voice choked with emotion said:

'O Benign one! By your words my ignorance and delusion have vanished today. By your gracious words, I have today seen the most exalted state of the infinite Bliss. That divine nectar which I was searching after in vain since my birth, I have obtained today by your blessed company. Infinite is the glory of the blessed company of *sādhus* (holy men)!'

(*concluded*)

—*Sañjaya*

Source: *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha-Rāmāyaṇa*, 'Nirvāṇa-prakaraṇa', Part I.

SRI AUROBINDO: EARLY SPIRITUAL LIFE

SRI M. P. PANDIT

It is not easy to say precisely when Sri Aurobindo began his spiritual career. As one studies his life, it becomes evident that his spiritual growth started at his very birth. We have it on record that even when he was hardly five, he had a dream experience while reading in the Convent at Darjeeling, of a mass of darkness entering into him. The little boy was conscious thenceforth of some heaviness, a load of *tamas*, hanging around him throughout his fourteen-year stay in England thereafter. He mentions that this *tamas* left him as he was returning from England and was completely cast off with the powerful descent of Peace that he experienced when he stepped on the shores of India at Apollo Bunder when he was twentyone.

Sri Aurobindo was highly sensitive even in his early age. At the age of eleven, while in England, he had already received the strong impression that a period of general upheaval and revolutionary changes was coming in the world and he himself had to play a part in it. A firm decision to take part in it, however, took shape only at the end of another four years.

It was during this stay in England that he studied the Upanisads in their English translation by Max Müller. And while doing so he had a definitive experience of the Self. He had also the concrete feeling of the emergence in him of an irresistible strength.

The first major spiritual experience that Sri Aurobindo had occurred when he landed in India after a stay of fourteen years in England. There was a descent of tremendous Peace in him and this Peace and Silence continued for a time. Speaking of this period Sri Aurobindo writes:

> 'Since I set foot on the Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these were not divorced from this world but had an inner and infinite bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes with influences and an effect from them upon the material plane.'[1]

Sri Aurobindo spent the next thirteen years of his life at Baroda in the State service though he was taking interest, and in later years participating, in the nationalist agitation from behind the veil. In fact it was his passion for the liberation of the motherland from slavery to an alien power that led him to take interest in Yoga. 'I

[1] *Letters on Yoga.*

had thought that a Yoga which required me to give up the world was not for me. I have to liberate my country. I took to it seriously when I learnt that the same tapasya which one does to get away from the world can be turned to action. I learnt that Yoga gives power, and I thought why the devil should I not get the power and use it to liberate my country?'[2] And so Sri Aurobindo was led to the path of Yoga. He had certain remarkable spiritual experiences during these years which opened the windows of his being on the different aspects of the Divine Reality. One of them is described by him thus: 'With my European mind I had no faith in image worship and I hardly believed in the presence of God. I went to Karnali (near Chandod) where there are several temples. There is one of Kali and when I looked at the Image I saw the living Presence there. For the first time I believed in the presence of God.'[3]

Much later, in 1939, he was to write the following sonnet referring to this experience:

The Stone Goddess

In a town of gods, housed in a little shrine,
From sculptured limbs the Godhead looked at me,—

A living Presence deathless and divine,
A Form that harboured all infinity.
The great World-Mother and her mighty will
Inhabited the earth's abysmal sleep,
Voiceless, omnipotent, inscrutable,
Mute in the desert and the sky and deep.

Now veiled with mind she dwells and speaks no word,
Voiceless, inscrutable, omniscient,
Hiding until our soul has seen, has heard
The secret of her strange embodiment.

One in the worshipper and the immobile shape,
A beauty and mystery flesh or stone can drape.

It was also during this period, in 1894 to be precise, that while going in a horse carriage Sri Aurobindo was in danger of an accident. 'At that moment Sri Aurobindo willed that it should not happen. Immediately there appeared a Being of Light in him which instantly took charge of the situation and what was certain to be an accident was miraculously averted.'[4] This experience too was later to be eternized by him in the form of a sonnet:

The Godhead

I sat behind the dance of Danger's hooves
In the shouting street that seemed a futurist's whim,
And suddenly felt, exceeding Nature's grooves,
In me, enveloping me the body of Him.

Above my head a mighty head was seen
A face with the calm of immortality
And an omnipotent gaze that held the scene
In the vast circle of its sovereignty.

His hair was mingled with the sun and breeze;
The world was in His heart and He was I:
I housed in me the Everlasting's peace,
The strength of One whose substance cannot die.

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[2] A. B. Purani: *Life of Sri Aurobindo*, p. 108.

[3] *Reminiscences and Anecdotes of Sri Aurobindo*, p. 65.

[4] Keshav Murti: *Sri Aurobindo the Hope of Man*, p. 44.

The moment passed and all was as before;
Only that deathless memory I bore.

Another capital experience relates to his visit to Kashmir where he visited Takhat-i-Suleman or what is known as the 'Hill of Śaṅkarācārya'. There without any effort he experienced the vacant Infinite in a very tangible way and the experience left a deep impression upon his mind, and later he was to compose this sonnet.

Advaita

I walked on the high-wayed seat of Solomon
Where Shankaracharya's tiny temple stands,
Facing Infinity from Time's edge, alone
On the bare ridge ending earth's vain romance.

Around me was a formless solitude:
All had become one strange Unnameable,
An unborn sole Reality world-nude
Topless and fathomless, for ever still.

A Silence that was Being's only word,
The unknown beginning and the voiceless end
Abolishing all things moment-seen or heard,
On an incommunicable summit reigned,

A lonely Calm and void unchanging Peace
On the dumb crest of Nature's mysteries.

The next, and in fact a totally revolutionary, experience was the great Advaitic realization that he got while receiving his first lessons in Yoga from Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, a Maharashtrian yogī of considerable following in those parts. They met in a small upstairs room of a friend. Sri Aurobindo and Lele 'sat together, and with an absolute fidelity, not caring to understand where he was being led and where he himself was going', Sri Aurobindo delivered himself into the hands of the guide—a guide whom he had not seen or known before.

'Sit down,' said Lele to Sri Aurobindo, 'look and you will see your thoughts coming to you from outside. Before they enter, fling them back.'

Sri Aurobindo sat down and looked, and, in his own words:

> 'I saw to my astonishment that it was so; I saw and felt concretely the thought approaching as if to enter through or above the head and was able to push it back concretely before it came inside. In three days—really in one—my mind became full of an eternal silence.... The result was a series of tremendously powerful experiences and radical change of consciousness which he (Lele) had never intended—for they were Advaitic and Vedantic and he was against Advaita Vedanta—and which were quite contrary to my own ideas, for they made me see with a stupendous intensity the world as a cinematographic play of vacant forms in the impersonal universality of the Absolute Brahman.... From that moment, in principle, the mental being in me became a free intelligence, a universal Mind, not limited to the narrow circle of personal thought as a labourer in a thought factory, but a receiver of knowledge from all the hundred realms of being and free to choose what it willed in this vast sight-empire and thought-empire.'

Sri Aurobindo's unquestioned giving of himself into the hands of the guide with an entire passivity astonished Lele himself who said later that he had never met anyone before who could surrender himself so completely without the least reserve. 'The final upshot', Sri Aurobindo continues, 'was made by a Voice within him to hand me over to

the Divine with me enjoining an absolute surrender to its will—a principle or rather a seed force to which I kept unswervingly and increasingly till it led me through all the mazes of incalculable Yogic development bound by no single rule or style or dogma or shastra to where and what I am not and towards what shall be hereafter.'[5]

The next landmark in Sri Aurobindo's inner life may be said to be the realization of the Universal Godhead, Vāsudeva, that he had when he was incarcerated in Alipore jail (1908-09):

'When I was arrested and hurried to the Lal Bazar *hajat* I was shaken in faith for a while, for I could not look into the heart of His intention. Therefore I faltered for a moment and cried out in my heart to Him, "What is this that has happened to me? I believed that I had a mission to work for the people of my country and until that work was done, I should have Thy protection. Why then am I here and on such a charge?" A day passed and a second day and a third, when a voice came to me from within, "wait and see." Then I grew calm and waited. I was taken from Lal Bazar to Alipore and was placed for one month in a solitary cell apart from men. There I waited day and night for the voice of God within me, to know what He had to say to me, to learn what I had to do. In this seclusion the earliest realisation, the first lesson came to me. I remembered then that a month or more before my arrest, a call had come to me to put aside all activity, to go into seclusion and to look into myself, so that I might enter into closer communion with Him. I was weak and could not accept the call. My work was very dear to me and in the pride of my heart I thought that unless I was there, it would suffer or even fail and cease; therefore I would not leave it. It seemed to me that He spoke to me again and said, "The bonds you had not strength to break, I have broken for you, because it is not my will nor was it ever my intention that that should continue. I have had another thing for you to do and it is for that I have brought you here, to teach you what you could not learn for yourself and to train you for my work." Then he placed the *Gita* in my hands. His strength entered into me and I was not only to understand intellectually but to realise what Sri Krishna demanded of Arjuna and what He demands of those who aspire to do His work.

'He made me realise the central truth of the Hindu religion. He turned the hearts of my jailors to me and they spoke to the Englishman in charge of the jail, "He is suffering in his confinement; let him at least walk outside his cell for half an hour in the morning and in the evening." So it was arranged, and it was while I was walking that His strength again entered into me. I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned; no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me His shade. I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arms of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my Friend and Lover. This was the first use of the deeper vision He gave me. I looked at the prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, swindlers, and as I looked at them I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in these darkened souls and misused bodies. Amongst these thieves and dacoits there were many who put me to shame by their sympathy, their kindness, the humanity triumphant over such adverse circumstances. One I saw among them especially, who seemed to me a saint, a peasant of my nation who did not know how to read and write, an alleged dacoit sen-

5 ibid., pp. 125-6.

tenced to ten years' rigorous imprisonment, one of those whom we look down upon in our Pharisaical pride of class as *chhotalok*. Once more He spoke to me and said, "Behold the people among whom I have sent you to do a little of My work. This is the nature of the nation I am raising up and the reason why I raise them."

'When the case opened in the lower court and we were brought before the magistrate I was followed by the same insight. He said to me, "When you were cast into jail, did not your heart fail and did you not cry out to Me, where is Thy protection? Look now at the Magistrate, look now at the Prosecuting Counsel." I looked and it was not the Magistrate whom I saw, it was Vasudeva, it was Narayana who was sitting there on the bench. I looked at the Prosecuting Counsel and it was not the Counsel for the prosecution that I saw; it was Sri Krishna who sat there, it was my Lover and Friend who sat there and smiled. "Now do you fear?" He said, "I am in all men and I overrule their actions and their words. My protection is still with you and you shall not fear. This case which is brought against you, leave it in My hand. It is not for you. It was not for the trial that I brought you here but for something else. The case itself is only a means for My work and nothing more." Afterwards when the trial opened in the Sessions Court, I began to write my many instructions for my Counsel as to what was false in the evidence against me and on what points the witnesses might be cross-examined. Then something happened which I had not expected. The arrangements which had been for my defence were suddenly changed and another Counsel stood there to defend me. He came unexpectedly,—a friend of mine, but I did not know he was coming. You have all heard the name of the man who put away from him all other thoughts and abandoned all his practice who sat up half the night day after day for months and broke his health to save me,—Srijut Chittaranjan Das. When I saw him, I was satisfied, but I still thought it necessary to write instructions. Then all that was put from me and I had the message from within. "This is the man who will save you from the snares put around your feet. Put aside those papers. It is not you who will instruct him. I will instruct him." From that time I did not of myself speak a word to my Counsel about the case or give a single instruction, and if ever I was asked a question, I always found that my answer did not help the case. I had left it to him and he took it entirely into his hands, with what result you know. I knew all along what He meant for me, for I heard it again and again, always I listened to the voice within: "I am guiding, therefore fear not. Turn to your own work for which I have brought you to jail and when you come out, remember never to fear, never to hesitate. Remember that it is I who am doing this, not you nor any other. Therefore whatever clouds may come, whatever dangers and sufferings, whatever difficulties, whatever impossibilities, there is nothing impossible, nothing difficult. I am in the nation and its uprising and I am Vasudeva, I am Narayana, and what I will, shall be, no human power can stay."'[6]

It was also during this period that Sri Aurobindo had contact with Swami Vivekananda. In fact he had experience of Vivekananda's presence even as far back as 1904 when he was practising *prāṇāyāma*. He once observed: 'I had direct experience of Vivekananda's presence when I was practising hathayoga. I felt his presence standing behind and watching over me. That exerted a great influence afterwards in my life.'[7]

Regarding his contact in jail, let him speak:

'From the beginning I didn't feel Nirvana to be the highest spiritual achievement. Something in me always wanted to go on farther. But, even then, I did not ask for this new experience. In fact in Nirvana, with that peace one does not ask

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6 *Uttarapara Speech*.

7 M. P. Pandit: *Shining Harvest*, p. 208.

for anything. But the truth of the supermind was put on me . . . it was the spirit of Vivekananda who first gave me a clue in the direction of the supermind. This clue led me to see how the truth-consciousness works in everything. He didn't say "supermind". He just said to me, "this is this, this is that" and so on. That was how he proceeded, by pointing and indicating. He visited me for fifteen days in Alipore jail and, until I could grasp the whole thing, he went on teaching me and impressed upon my mind the working of the Higher Consciousness—the truth-consciousness in general which leads towards the supermind. He would not leave me until he had put it all into my head. . . . I never expected him and yet he came to teach me. And he was very exact and precise even in the minutest details.'[8]

Sri Aurobindo's subsequent retirement from public life and exclusive dedication to yoga after 1910 are well known. What followed thereafter is a subject that would need quite another treatment.

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8 ibid., p. 209.

A REMINISCENCE

KUMUDBANDHU SEN

Translated by Swami Chetanananda

I first met Latu Maharaj in 1894 at the Alambazar Monastery. But it was from Sasi Maharaj [Swami Ramakrishnananda] that I first heard about him, while visiting the Baranagore Math as a boy. On that occasion he said to me :

'The intimate disciples of Ramakrishna are like a bouquet of many different flowers. Each is the embodiment of a particular *bhāva* [idea], but all are bound together by the love-thread of Ramakrishna. Just see Latu Maharaj. Ramchandra Datta engaged this boy from Bihar as a servant. He would send him now and then to Ramakrishna with fruit, sweets, and so forth. At a glance, Sri Ramakrishna knew that this boy belonged to his inner circle. Then after a few visits, he came to stay with Ramakrishna on a permanent basis.

'His service was something remarkable. Although his primary responsibility was to serve the Holy Mother and Sri Ramakrishna, at the same time Latu had tremendous *niṣṭhā* [steadiness] in spiritual practice. Sri Ramakrishna had some knowledge of reading and writing, but Latu was completely unlettered.'

After hearing this from Sasi Maharaj, I developed a strong desire to talk with Latu Maharaj. When I visited the monastery I would see him meditating ; and at other times, I would notice his brother-disciples cutting all sorts of jokes with him, for his simple nature aroused their sense of humour.

One day, therefore, I went to the monastery at Alambazar to talk with Latu Maharaj. After first prostrating myself, I stood before him. He told me to sit down, and then asked, 'Where do you live ? Who else is in your family ? How did you come here ? '

Then he said : 'Read attentively. Just see how learned my brother-disciples are, how they are constantly engaged in study and meditation. Narendra—what a miracle he performed in America ! People of that country are amazed at his learning.

'One must concentrate upon God. If you cannot even concentrate upon studies sufficiently as a student, how can you expect to call on God? Come here now and then when you can. Chant the name of the Lord every morning. After washing, put on a clean cloth, sit in the corner of a room or a solitary place and think of God. You will then be happy in life.'

He spoke these words in Bengali, but with his native Hindi accent.

On another occasion at Alambazar, I was listening to a conversation between Swamis Saradananda and Yogananda. They were talking about Ramakrishna. Latu Maharaj was sitting on the front portion of the southern veranda. Just then a *kīrtan* [devotional singing] party was seen wending its way down the street in front of us. Hearing their singing, Latu Maharaj went into an ecstatic state. Swami Saradananda at once noticed his condition and cried out, 'Latu is in ecstasy—see that he doesn't fall!' The Swamis went over to Latu Maharaj and began to chant the name of the Lord. They did this for some time. At last, Latu Maharaj regained consciousness of the outer world. He said, simply, 'nothing happened'. Then he hurried towards the shrine of Ramakrishna. This was the first time I had ever seen anyone in *samādhi*. The Swamis resumed their conversation and made no mention of the incident. I later understood that such experiences were common among the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and they did not consider it a matter requiring any particular comment.

I also observed at the Alambazar monastery, Nilambar Babu's garden house, and Belur Math that both Swamiji and Swami Brahmananda would poke fun at Latu Maharaj, and he would believe them like a simple boy. For example, as soon as any Western disciples of Swamiji came in sight, he would slip away. One day, in jest, Swamiji said to him, 'Brother Latu, this time you will have to go to America. Many people want to meet you, for they know you were a pet disciple of Ramakrishna.'

With some embarrassment, Latu Maharaj said, 'Brother Naren, I shall not go. That is a *mlechchha* [untouchable] country. I would not be able to adjust to it.'

'What!' said Swamiji. 'These are devotees of Ramakrishna, and in his name the whole country has become holy. They will love and respect you.'

With folded hands, Latu Maharaj replied, 'No, no. You must excuse me, brother, I cannot go. I am an illiterate person. What do I know? I cannot talk to them, I don't know their language.'

This sort of conversation went on for some time, with Swamiji continuing to insist, and Latu Maharaj entreating him. Finally, Swami Brahmananda broke in, 'Nevertheless, they will catch you and force you to go to America.' At this remark, the face of Latu Maharaj paled and everyone laughed. He did not understand that these remarks were only made in jest. Therefore, without telling anyone, he left the monastery and fled to Balaram's house in Calcutta. I witnessed many such events. To help wipe out his fear of Westerners, Swamiji took Latu Maharaj with him on his tour of Kashmir.

One day at Balaram's, I asked Latu Maharaj: 'Maharaj, will you please tell me about Ramakrishna? Please give me your impression of him.'

He said to me rather gravely, 'Did you see Swami Vivekananda? What did you notice in him?'

'He was a man of bliss,' I replied. 'Since he possessed this bliss, those who visited him and heard him would also taste that wonderful joy.'

On hearing this, the face of Latu Maharaj beamed, and he said, 'Swamiji was a

man of bliss—that is so. Now think of Ramakrishna, who was a hundred times more blissful. There is nothing to be compared with that bliss.' Saying this, he once more became serious. As I looked at him he became quite serious again, and indrawn.

As I observed this unlettered disciple of Ramakrishna, I thought to myself, 'How narrow, how negligible is book-knowledge compared with his knowledge, which has come through realization and direct perception. He expresses the most abstruse philosophical matters in such simple language. How wonderfully is the miraculous power of Sri Ramakrishna revealed in the life of Swami Adbhutananda!' [The Sanskrit word *adbhuta* is literally translated as 'full of wonder'.]

Once a group of Western tourists had heard of this illiterate disciple of Ramakrishna, and they came to talk with him, accompanied by an interpreter. They said to Latu Maharaj, 'We have not come here to hear anything about God because we do not believe in His existence.'

Latu Maharaj said in reply, 'Well, then, what do you believe in.'

'The supreme goal of humanity is to help man. Our ideal is to guide our lives in this direction.'

Latu Maharaj smiled and said to them, 'Well, you think that if you do this work you will benefit man ; another thinks that their work will bring more benefit. Therefore, friction arises between the two groups. What then if your group were to disagree with its leader ? Will you then be able to serve the people ? Do not pride, anger, egotism, and discord create many hindrances ? Look at the world—how much quarrelling is going on in the name of a noble cause or good works! God is in every being. If you serve others with this attitude, and, moreover, look upon them as the children of God—then you will experience no difficulties.'

One of the Western women smiled and said, 'But your God is so little, if, as you say, he is in every man. On the other hand, you believe that he is infinite and all-pervading. This is a rather strange sort of God!'

Hearing this, Latu Maharaj became grave. 'Have you ever seen the jasmine flower ? Its petals are very small. And have you ever noticed a dewdrop on one of these petals ? Perhaps you have seen how, in that one drop of dew, the infinite sky is reflected. Like that, the all-powerful God is reflected in His creatures.' When the women heard this, they were dumbfounded. Then they respectfully bid him goodbye.

Often when he would hear some reading of a scripture, Latu Maharaj would exclaim, in a burst of joy: 'That is right ; I have experienced that!'

One day Swami Abhedananda told me how hard he had worked in the West to preach the ideal of Ramakrishna, and how, after Swamiji's passing, his lecturing earned much praise among many Western savants. I said to him, 'Maharaj, you and Swamiji are accomplished speakers and knowers of Brahman. It is no wonder that through the grace of Ramakrishna these things have come to you. But Latu Maharaj was unlettered. Like guru, like disciple. He was a mere shepherd boy, a servant. His wonderful life and wisdom are shining examples of the miraculous power of Sri Ramakrishna.'

Swami Abhedananda was moved by these words, and said tenderly, 'Yes, you are right. We, the brother disciples, consider Latu Maharaj the miracle of Ramakrishna. A great man such as he is rare in this world.'

When Latu Maharaj would stay at Balaram Bose's house, I was amazed to see what love he expressed for the devotees. Both young and old would come there, all

devotees of Ramakrishna. Once a young man approached the Swami and told him that he planned to give up his job and pass the remainder of his days in spiritual practices and the undertaking of pilgrimages to various temples and shrines. At this, Latu Maharaj said sternly: 'So you would like to be a vagabond and avoid the duties expected of you by your parents! No. Your duty now is to serve your parents and, especially, your old grandmother who nursed you from childhood. Who will feed them if you give up your job?

'I know what devotion you have towards God. How long do you meditate? I sometimes see you loafing about here and there. Know for certain that those who pretend to be *tyāgīs* [renouncers] by not caring for their parents will never be able to call on God with one-pointed devotion. They pass their days in restlessness. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "Parents are the living gods." One should serve them and fulfil their needs. One should ask their blessings. First make arrangements for their necessities; then you can retire to solitude to practise spiritual disciplines. Only then will you be able to call upon God without interruption. So give up this misleading attitude. When genuine renunciation comes to you, God Himself will arrange everything. Don't force anything or act impulsively.'

Then he looked at me and said, 'Just see, he is going to become a monk without arranging any support for his ageing parents. There is no greater sin in this world. Ask him to perform spiritual practice—within five minutes everything is finished! Just note the amount of their renunciation! If anybody calls on God with heart and soul, He arranges everything.'

Thus when anyone tried to avoid his duty, Latu Maharaj would use both sound advice and scoldings to correct his wrong understanding.

I visited Varanasi on several occasions in order to see Latu Maharaj. Never can I forget his love and compassion. He was the exemplary teacher, always helping his devotees to build their lives through spiritual disciplines. He used to answer their questions in a simple and direct manner. The very sight of him would remind us of the presence of a great soul, filled with divine bliss, simple and childlike. Once he told me at Varanasi: 'Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "Kāśī [Varanasi] is a golden city. Viśwanāth, the great god, is liberating the *jīvas* by imparting the supreme *mantra*." Infinite is the compassion of Viśwanāth. Annapūrṇā, the divine Mother, is supplying food—spiritual as well as physical—to all. God incarnates as an avatar, as a man, and thereby blesses the world. Please keep this in mind while here, in this holy place of Varanasi.' I still remember him on this occasion, seated quietly, completely merged in thought. When, about to leave, I prostrated myself before him, he said affectionately, 'You are staying at the Advaita Ashrama. Come now and then to visit me.'

Often I think of his infinite compassion and joyful face, and his divine form lingers in my memory for a long time.

CORRIGENDA

Vide July 1972 *Prabuddha Bharata*, p. 292, second column, line 13: *for* sensual *read* highest

A CORRECTION

In our issue of October 1971, p. 434, first column, line 15, please read 'Matiswar' in the place of 'Abhiswar'.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Questions and answers are from: 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* Translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1944. References: questions 1, pp. 304-5; 2 and 3, pp. 378-9.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from: *The Complete Works,* Vol. II (1963), pp. 152-3.

A hundred years are completed after Sri Aurobindo's birth. To the world-wide homage that this Mahāyogī will receive from humanity we mingle our own.

Readers of the *Prabuddha Bharata* participating in our paying homage to Sri Aurobindo, will be interested in going through his two writings in which he presents with characteristic insight some of his assessment of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda phenomenon.

These two writings of Sri Aurobindo appeared in the *Karmayogin,* which was a nationalist paper during the first outburst of nationalism in Bengal.

The bicentenary of Rammohan Ray this year is focusing the attention of our countrymen on the personality, life, and work of this great son of India. Hailed as the 'Morning Star' of Indian Renaissance, he has secured an immortal place in the history of modern India. A religious and social reformer, a champion of education and freedom, a humanist and a universalist, Rammohan was a versatile pioneer who displayed tremendous dynamism and far-seeing vision. 'Ram Mohan Roy,' remarks Romain Rolland, 'an extraordinary man who ushered in a new era in the spiritual history of the ancient continent, was the first really cosmopolitan type in India.'

'Rammohan Ray—A Peep into His Life and Work' gives a balanced sketch of this great Indian in a brief compass. Prof. Pranab Ranjan Ghosh, its author, is Reader, Department of Bengali, Calcutta University.

Swami Ramakrishnananda was regarded by Swami Vivekananda as the 'Pillar of the Math', the main support of the brotherhood after Sri Ramakrishna's passing. It was Sasi's one-pointed devotion to the Guru that earned him the monastic name of 'Ramakrishnananda'—'one who finds his bliss in Ramakrishna'—, upon which Swami Vivekananda had once cast a covetous look. The 'Explorer' brings to our columns an inspiring profile of this great apostle of Sri Ramakrishna to the southern India. Swami Ramakrishnananda's birthday falls in this month.

In 'Walking on the Razor's Edge', Swami Yatiswarananda, making about a dozen verses of the *Kaṭhopaniṣad* the nucleus, elaborates on the spiritual life and its essentials. This was originally delivered as a weekly discourse on 14-12-1947 at the Vedanta Centre, Philadelphia, U.S.A., where he worked for many years. (Due to various reasons the Philadelphia Vedanta Centre later became defunct.)

Sri Aurobindo, a great Yogī and a teacher, has made a distinctive contribution to the spiritual and philosophical storehouse of humanity. In a well-documented article concerning his early life, Sri M. P. Pandit, Aurobindo Ashrama, Pondicherry, brings to our readers an account of the influences, inspirations, and visions that sustained and shaped him in those stormy early years.

Swami Adbhutananda has a uniqueness among the apostles of Sri Ramakrishna in having been a totally unlettered person. But his insight into the holy books and human nature was astounding. This reminiscence by Kumudbandhu Sen was originally recorded in Bengali and formed a part of *Adbhutananda-prasanga* by Swami Siddhananda. Swami Chetanananda, Assistant-minister in Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood, has translated it for the *Prabuddha Bharata*. And, possibly, it is appearing in English for the first time.

VIVEKANANDA KENDRA PATRIKA

In erecting the magnificent granite memorial to Swamiji on the Vivekananda Rock off shore Kanyakumari, the Rock Memorial Committee and its leadership have shown remarkable determination, enterprise, and dedication. The second phase of the Committee's programme is now being executed with the same spirit of dedication and organization. With the motive of serving man, a non-monastic order for devoted and qualified young men has been established at Vivekanandapuram in Kanyakumari. *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika* is the official organ of this service mission. The magazine is in English and a half-yearly publication.

This first number is built round the noble theme—so dear to Swami Vivekananda's heart—of 'Serve Man: Serve God'. Containing over 200 pages of valuable reading matter, the *Patrika* approaches the theme of service and man through many religions, prophets, and saints. In addition to the ideas of service of man according to Hinduism and its branches, the gospel of service according to Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Zoroastrianism is also presented. Many modern Indian spiritual and social leaders speak to the readers through these pages. Polychrome and halftone pictures on art paper, and drawings and sketches of saints and sages enhance its attraction. A number of distinguished writers have contributed to the magazine. The magazine is a welcome addition to the family of cultural periodicals in the country.

We, however, wish to suggest that instead of being a half-yearly the *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika* could be made a quarterly publication. Then the bulk of two hundred and odd pages of reading material of a single issue could be spread over two issues. The readers would also appreciate it if in future issues the significance of the cover-page illustration is explained and if the contributors are introduced.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE: A UNESCO SYMPOSIUM ON GANDHI, EDITED BY T. K. MAHADEVAN, Published by Gandhi Peace Foundation, Deendayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi 1, 1970, Pages 385, Price Rs. 15.00.

In a world charged with duplicity and violence, mutual distrust and belligerency, Gandhi showed a way of life and also a way towards life that would enable man to realize the kingdom of heaven on this earth. Some of the values cherished, practised and preached by Gandhi have been motivating the activities of the UNESCO. It is therefore in the fitness of things that this only valuable organ of the UNO conducted a good symposium in October 1969. There were 33 participants drawn from all parts of the world. These were the persons alive to the precarious situation of the modern man. In their search to make the individual and the world safe, they turned to the thoughts of Gandhi. Their valuable findings are presented in the present Volume which is ably introduced by Sri T. K. Mahadevan. As Gandhi prophesied: 'They say they do not understand my language, that they speak a language foreign to me. But I know this, that when I am gone they will speak my language.' The proceedings of the Seminar are extremely stimulating. The Volume deserves a careful study by social thinkers, politicians, reformers, and philosophers.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

MALAYALAM

SRI RAMAKRISHNA VACHANAMRITAM (IN THREE VOLUMES): TRANSLATED BY SWAMI SIDDHINATHANANDA, published by the President, Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Puranattukara, Trichur (Kerala), 1968-1970, each volume comprising over six hundred pages priced at Rs. 10.00.

The original Bengali *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* by M. has been translated into English and some vernaculars, and they all have undergone several editions. And here is a welcome edition in Malayalam, the language of Kerala.

In 1875, many years before the publication of the *Kathamrita,* a celebrated Indian thinker and reformer said, 'We met long ago Paramahamsa (Sri Ramakrishna) of Dakshineswar, and were charmed by the depth, penetration and simplicity of his spirit. The never-ceasing metaphors and analogies in which he indulged are most of them as apt as they are beautiful.'

Thus the many inimitable and charming utterances of Sri Ramakrishna, preserved and published, have given great solace and inspiration to millions of men and women not only of India but also of the other parts of the world. It is said of the famous Prof. Max Müller that 'again and again he would read some of the sayings in which the Hindu spirit found striking expression, and his voice trembled with responsive feeling'.

The translation under review is literal and faithful, and conveys fairly the beauty of the original. Unlike the original, this edition follows a chronological arrangement. A brief biography of the author M. (Mahendranath Gupta) is a thoughtful addition, following a good Preface, to the *Vachanamritam*. Inclusion of the two letters of authenticity and appreciation from Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda, addressed to M., would have enhanced the value of this volume. A special feature of this edition is of course the songs in effective Malayalam rendering and tune. But the original Bengali songs and their *rāgas* might have been given as appendix in Malayalam characters for the benefit of music lovers among the readers. The index at the end of each volume is useful. While reference here and there to scriptural passages is needless, the word 'Brahma-Samaj' occurring at a number of places ought to be 'Brāhma-Samaj'. With good printing and binding, the get-up is attractive. The edition is a boon to the Malayalam-knowing public. All institutions, particularly educational and cultural, throughout Kerala will do well to keep in their libraries a set of the *Vachanamritam.*

EKATMANANDA

BOOKS RECEIVED

A SOURCE BOOK OF ADVAITA VEDANTA: BY ELIOT DEUTSCH AND J.A.B. VAN BUITENEN, published by University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, $ 15.00.

PRITHVIRAJ CHAUHAN: ED. BY ANANT PAI, published by I.B.H. Education Trust, 249, D. N. Road, Bombay 1, Rs. 1.50.

ISAVASYOPANISHAD: TRANSLATED BY SWAMI SATCHIDANANDENDRA SARASWATI, published by Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya, Holenarsipur, Hassan, Mysore, Rs. 2/-.

MAHAYOGINI SHRI MANIKESHWARI: BY M. V. N. SUBBA RAU, published by Mahayogini Sri Manikyeshwari Trust, Manikgiri, Gulbarga, Mysore, Rs. 2/-.

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, CHERRAPUNJI

Report for the years 1964-65 to 1970-71

This Centre of the Ramakrishna Mission has different branches which are scattered over Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Their activities are as following:

1. *The Ashrama at Cherrapunji*: The Ashrama has a small shrine and a prayer room. Regular *bhajan* is conducted once every week in which a number of Khasis of Cherrapunji—men, women and children—take part. Birthdays of great saints specially those of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda are celebrated. Every Sunday classes are taken in Khasi language on Khasi religion and culture. Booklets in Khasi on the life of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Sarada Devi have been published and are distributed free.

2. *The High School, Cherrapunji*: The school is managed by a committee of several Khasi members. The staff consists of 29 qualified and experienced teachers. The school attracts students even from the distant places like Naga Hills, Mizo Hills and Manipur. Quite a good number of the old students have distinguished themselves as men of character and ability.

The curriculum followed is that prescribed by the Board of Secondary Education, Assam. The school has a fine library containing 10,000 books. The Reading Room receives many good papers and journals. Debates, elocution, music, games and sports are also some of the items of the student activities. The school is now a life-member of the Red Cross Society. The institution has one Junion Division Air Troop N.C.C. Weaving, Tailoring, Typewriting, Carpentry and Bee-keeping are taught as vocational subjects in classes VII and VIII. Lectures, film-shows and important functions are arranged in the Community Hall (Vivekananda Centenary Hall) from time to time.

The High School receives financial assistance from the Govt. of Meghalaya under the 'Deficit Grant System'. All the tribal students are given full free concession.

Attached to the Ashrama is the Students' Home run under the direct supervision of the workers of the Mission.

3. *The Shella Sub-centre*: Shella is a village 13 miles south of Cherrapunji. The activities of the Ashrama at Shella are conducted by local Khasi devotees. Religious classes, devotional songs etc. form important items of the programme. Community Hall, Free Reading Room and Library are also situated very near to the Ashrama. A total of 127 boys and girls read in the Middle English School and Primary School of this sub-centre. Results have been satisfactory.

4. *The Sohbar Sub-centre*: Sohbar is also a village 8 miles from Cherrapunji. 67 boys and girls read in the Junior Basic School and Middle English School. The Middle English School has achieved uniformly excellent results. In the Technical Section attached to this school, there are Weaving, Embroidery, and Tailoring. There is a Students' Home with 20 boys. A Girls' Hostel building for 20 girls has been constructed very recently.

5. *Other Primary and Middle Schools*: Besides schools at Sohbar and Shella there are 9 Middle and 26 Primary Schools scattered all over the South Khasi Hills under the management of this Centre. Altogether 1051 boys and 1086 girls read at present in these 35 schools. Results have been uniformly good.

6. Arranging inspection of schools, organizing seminars and educational tours are other activities of the Mission. The Mission has the Agency for organizing Beekeeping Industry in the South Khasi Hills.

7. *Needs*: A standing fund for helping poor hill people Rs. 1,00,000; Publication of Indian National Literature in the Khasi language Rs. 25,000; Cultural Activities fund to promote National Integration Rs. 1,00,000; Repairs and Maintenance Rs. 2,00,000; Mobile Audio-Visual Unit Rs. 1,00,000; Play Ground and Pavilion Rs. 1,00,000; Medical Unit for Hostel Rs. 1,00,000; and Improvement of water supply Rs. 25,000.

RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA AND VEDANTA LITERATURE

BOOKS ON SRI RAMAKRISHNA

	Price
* Life of Sri Ramakrishna Foreword by Mahatma Gandhi Limp Bound :	11·00
De Luxe :	16·00
* The Life of Ramakrishna By Romain Rolland	5·75
* A Short Life of Sri Ramakrishna	1·25
Sri Ramakrishna And His Mission—By Swami Ramakrishnananda	0·62
* Sri Ramakrishna And Swami Vivekananda—By Jawaharlal Nehru	0·60
* Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna	5·00
De Luxe	7·00
Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna	6·00
* My Master—By Swami Vivekananda	0·70
* The Message of Ramakrishna	0·30
* Ramakrishna And His Disciples—By Christopher Isherwood	12·50
Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master	30·00
The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna	30·00
Ramakrishna Upanishad By C. Rajagopalachari	1·50
Tales And Parables of Sri Ramakrishna	3·00
Words of the Master *Compiled* By Swami Brahmananda Board :	1·25
Cloth :	2·00
* The Apostles of Sri Ramakrishna	7·50

BOOKS ON HOLY MOTHER

	Price
Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi—By Swami Gambhirananda Board :	12·50
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WORKS ON AND OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

* The Life of Vivekananda And The Universal Gospel—By Romain Rolland	6·25
* Vivekananda (A Biography) By Swami Nikhilananda Paper bach	3·50
De Luxe	6·25
The Master As I Saw Him—By Sister Nivedita	5·50
* The Story of Vivekananda (illustrated for children)	3·75
* A Short Life of Swami Vivekananda	1·50
* The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (In Eight Volumes) Per Vol. Board :	9·00
Cloth :	12·50
Per Set. Board :	70·00
Cloth :	96·00

		Price
* Raja Yoga	Board :	3·00
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* Bhakti Yoga	Board :	1·25
	Cloth :	3·00
* Karma Yoga	Board :	1·25
	Cloth :	3·00
* Jnana Yoga	Board :	3·60
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* Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries		18·00
* Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda		7·50
* Swami Vivekananda Birth Centenary Commemoration Volume		30·00
Vivekananda: His call to the Nation		0·50
* Parliament of Religions		18·00
Six Lessons on Raja-Yoga		0·75
Realisation and Its Methods		2·00

SANSKRIT WORKS WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATION

* Shrimad-Bhagavad-Gita—By Swami Swarupananda		7·50
* Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (With Shankara's Commentary)—By Swami Madhavananda		14·00
* Eight Upanishads—Vol. I (With Shankara's Commentary)—By Swami Gambhirananda		7·50
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* Vairagya-Shatakam of Bhartrihari	1·50
* Vivekachudamani of Sri Shankaracharya Board :	4·50
Cloth :	5·50
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Editor : SWAMI BUDHANANDA, Joint Editor : SWAMI TADRUPANANDA
Printed by SWAMI SMARANANANDA at General Printers & Publishers (Pvt.) Ltd., 119 Dharamtolla St., Cal.-13 and Published by him for Advaita Ashrama (Mayavati), from 5 Dehi Entally Road, Calcutta 14
on August 1, 1972.
Cover & Art Plates Printed by Sun Lithographing Co., Calcutta 10

Phone : 44-2898 Registered No. C - 3780

Annual Subscription : India, Burma and Ceylon - Rupees Eight, U. S. A. - Four Dollars,
Other countries £ 1·00, Single Copy : Inland - 75 P.

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